# THE LORD'S-DAY Evening ENTERTAINMENT,

Containing Fifty-two

## Practical Diſcourſes

On the moſt ſerious and important

## SUBJECTS in DIVINITY,

Intended for the

## USE of FAMILIES.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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*By* JOHN MASON, *A. M.*

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# SERMON I.

## *Peter*'s FALL and the Means of his RECOVERY.

LUKE xxii. 61.

*And the* LORD *turned and looked upon Peter*;----

The whole Period runs thus,

*And the* LORD *turned and looked upon Peter*; *and Peter remembred the Word of the* LORD, *how he had ſaid unto him*, "*Before the Cock crow thou ſhalt deny me* "*thrice.*" *And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*

THERE is ſcarce a more affecting Narrative in all the ſacred Hiſtory than this of the Apoſtle *Peter*'s Fall; nor a more moving Cirumſtance in the whole Narrative

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than the remarkable manner of his Recovery, contained in the words I have now read.

What I propoſe is to make ſome remarks on the Circumſtances of his Fall, and the means of his Repentance as here recorded; and then conclude with a few Reflections ſuitable to the Subject.

I. I ſhall make ſome Remarks on the moſt memorable Circumſtances in the Apoſtle *Peter's* Fall. And

1. I obſerve it was occaſioned by his being ſecure in bad Company *(a)*. A double Snare! a Man can hardly be in a more dangerous Situation.——And into this, we ſee, *Peter* willingly thruſt himſelf *(b)*: which was the Source of all his ſubſequent Sin and Sorrow. Indeed when we are providentially thrown into the Company of wicked Men, and neceſſarily detained there, if we keep a guard upon our minds equal to a juſt ſenſe of our Danger, we may poſſibly eſcape the Snare, and come out of the worſt of Company with clean Hands and a pure

*(a)* Luke xxii. 55. *(b)* John xviii. 18, 25.

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pure Heart. But if we prefer the worſt of Company to none at all, or even to the beſt, if we are inſenſible to our danger from it and grow ſecure in it, we are then, like Mariners, among the Shelves in a dark and troubled Sea, where we can expect nothing but to make Shipwreck either of Faith or a good Conſcience.

2. Another remarkable Circumſtance in *Peter*'s Fall was, that it was occaſioned by the firſt Temptation, and that no very great one. Diſarmed by his carnal Security he makes no reſiſtance to the very firſt attack. A Girl ſuſpecting him to be a *Galilean*, charged him with it; and he immediately denied it: *I am not.*——Is this the great chriſtian Champion? the mighty Hero of the Apoſtles? the Man who but now vehemently affirmed, "he would ſooner die with "Chriſt than deny him?"——How ignorant was Peter of his Weakneſs! that Ignorance produced his Confidence, that Confidence his Security, and that Security his Fall. When theſe three meet (as they often do) they give a very bad diſpoſition to the Mind;

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and the concurrence of theſe betrayed the moſt reſolute Apoſtle, and, notwithſtanding all his Zeal, drove him to this dreadful Cataſtrophe. —— *Let him that ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.*

3. We may ſee from this Story how naturally Sin hardeneth the Heart and ſtupifies the Conſcience. *Peter* denied his Maſter twice, after the firſt crowing of the Cock had brought him to a ſenſe of his Sin. For ſo ſaint *Mark* relates it, that immediately after he had denied Chriſt the firſt time, *he went out into the Porch and heard the Cock crow (a)*: which was the very Token that had been given him, and muſt have brought the Words of his Maſter to his mind, *before the Cock crow twice thou ſhalt deny me thrice (b)*: which one ſhould think was warning enough. But his Heart was now hardened; and twice after this he denied him with Curſing, Imprecation and Oaths.

4. We further learn from this ſad Inſtance how naturally one Sin draws on another. *Peter's* firſt Crime was carnal Confidence and Security: Let us ſee now what a train of miſcarriages this drawed after it.

This

(a) Mark xiv. 68. (b) Mark xiv. 30.

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This led him first to contradict his Master; then to venture into the worst of Company; and the Sin of coming into such Company was the occasion of his denying him, that he might appear more suitable to the Company he was in. This first Denial made way for a second, which was more vehement; and that for a third with profane Oaths and Imprecations: and how much farther he had gone if divine Grace had not recalled him, GOD only knows. Thus Sin not only hardens the Heart, but thereby disposes and imboldens it to further Acts of Transgression.

5. The fairest Warnings will not prevent us from sinning, nor the fittest means recover us afterwards, without the help of divine Grace. *Peter*, one would think, had had warning enough. Our Saviour had foretold him of his Fall; but to no purpose: He heard the Cock crow; the very Signal given him of his approaching Temptation; but without effect. And we have reason to believe, that all other methods to procure his Recovery had been as ineffectual, as these Warnings to prevent his Fall, had not *the Lord turned and looked upon him.* O, what

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a Look was that!——The Cock crowed the ſecond time, after Peter had denied him thrice. But that ſecond alarm would have made no more impreſſion than the firſt, had not Chriſt that very inſtant caſt his Eye upon him. As if he had ſaid, "Doſt thou "hear that, *Peter?* Now whoſe words are "true, thine or mine?"——That Look he could not withſtand. The crowing of the Cock, and his own Reflections upon it, he could. But one Look from Chriſt ſubdued him; conquered, ſoftened, melted, ſunk him. His Sorrows, like a Deluge, broke in and overwhelmed him. He could no longer bear; but, like *Joſeph*, ſuddenly left his Company, retired to pour out the Fulneſs of his Soul, *and wept bitterly.*

All this can one Look from Jeſus do. When all human means fail, how eaſily can divine Grace touch the Sinner's Heart! The Cock might crow in vain, were it not for this divine Glance from the Eye of Chriſt. ——Chriſt turned and *looked* upon *Peter*, and he wept. ——O, what Compaſſion and Love, what Tenderneſs and Pity did he ſee in that ſingle Glance! from his dear Maſter whom he had juſt denied! That one Look

ſpoke

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ſpoke all his Heart. There was Heaven and Mercy in his Eye; which quite vanquiſhed the Apoſtle, and almoſt deluged him in Tears. And it is reported that he afterwards often wept when he mentioned any thing relating to this his ſhameful revolt, and that the Tears would be frequently ſtealing down his Cheeks at the remembrance of it *(c)*.

Theſe are ſome of the moſt memorable Circumſtances in ſaint *Peter*'s Fall, and the proper Obſervations that may be made thereupon. This inſtructive piece of Hiſtory is recorded by all the four Evangeliſts, for our caution; and when we thus ſee all the foibles of the human Heart ſo clearly diſplayed, we are as directly called to be upon our Guard as *Peter* was when our Lord foretold him the Circumſtances of his future Fall. And if we take not the warning we are no leſs inexcuſable. ----- Let us then be afraid of bad Company; the Devil's moſt ſucceſsful Engine——— beware of Self-confidence and Security———be watchful againſt all Sin, leſt we be inſenſibly hardened thereby———



(*c*) Semper lachrymis ſuffuſos habuiſſe oculos, adeo ut etiam lachrymæ cutem genarum exederint. *Trapp* in loc.

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and drawn into greater---and be humbly ſuppliant for and dependant upon divine Grace to prevent and recover us.

II. Let us now more particularly conſider the means of the Apoſtle *Peter*'s Recovery; intimated to us in the words of the Text. *And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*

Though all the four Evangeliſts relate this affecting Story of ſaint *Peter*'s Fall, yet only ſaint *Luke* takes notice of this particular Circumſtance of Chriſt's *turning and looking upon him*, which was the means of his Repentance. Let us conſider now what there might be in this ſingle Look that had ſo ſudden effect to awaken and reſtore this backſliding Apoſtle. And

1. We may conceive it to be a Look of *Reproof* and Reſentment. The Cock crew; and immediately Chriſt *turned, and looked upon Peter.* As if he had ſaid—"Heareſt "thou that well known Signal? What "thinkeſt thou now? Now where is all "thy boaſted Confidence and Courage? "Art thou the Man who but now decla-"red thou wouldſt ſooner die for me than "deny

" deny me? What, is all thy forward Talk " and flaming Zeal come to this?"—A Look from Chriſt, which carried with it ſo juſt a Reprimand, muſt be ſuppoſed to enter deep into *Peter*'s Heart; who ſtill loved his Maſter there: whom he denied not from a principle of Perfidy, but through the force of Fear. SERM. I.

2. We may ſuppoſe it alſo to be a very tender and *compaſſionate* Look. A look of Love; that carried in it melting mercy, and the pity of a Friend. As if he had ſaid--- " Doſt thou hear that, *Peter?* Unhappy " Creature! where art thou now? --- How " couldſt thou be ſo confident! I well knew " thy Weakneſs. Thou knoweſt it now " thyſelf.----But it this thy Kindneſs to thy " Friend? Was it for this I choſe and loved " thee? Have I deſerved this treatment from " *thee?* my favourite Apoſtle?"-----When *Julius Cæſar* was murdered in the Senate-houſe, his Friend *Brutus* gave him one ſtab among the reſt; which entered deeper into the dying Emperor's heart than all he had received before; and made him cry out (*et tu mi Fili!*) " what my dear *Brutus* a-" mong my Murderers." Something ſo touch-

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touching we may conceive to have been in that gracious Look which Chriſt caſt on *Peter*.---" What *Peter* amongſt my Perſe-
" cuters! Could I expect this from *thee?*
" ---I could bear it better from any other.
" And, believe it, thy treachery, profaneneſs
" and Apoſtacy, have more ſenſibly afflicted
" me, than all the Indignities I have met
" with before the High Prieſt's Tribunal."

3. From the effect it had upon *Peter* we may conceive it further to be a *reconciling* Look. Not a wrathful, vindictive Frown; but an overture of Peace and Pardon conveyed by the Eye directly from the Heart.---
" Ah! *Peter*, I will not diſown thee, though
" thou haſt denied me: though thou haſt
" forſaken me, I cannot caſt thee off. How
" do I pity thee! Behold theſe Eyes; doſt
" thou not ſee ſomething of Sympathy and
" Tenderneſs there? Believe it, thou haſt
" not yet loſt all thine Intereſt in me.
" Thou haſt denied me, but thou ſhalt not
" loſe me. The Blood I am going to ſhed
" ſhall atone for thy Guilt; nor will I ap-
" pear before my Father as thine Enemy."
----- No wonder that Peter could not withſtand ſuch a Look as this.

4. By

4. By this turn of the Eye we may ſuppoſe our Saviour to have conveyed a direct *Exhortation* to his backſliding Apoſtle. q. d. "Does not that crowing of the Cock bring "my Words to thy mind? Do not drive "back the conviction as thou didſt at firſt. "Go, think on what I ſaid, and on what "thou haſt done. Repent, and weep and "mourn. Remember the Look which I "now give thee; and remember, it is a "mercy I ever look upon thee more. Thou "haſt denied me; but if thou didſt ever "love me, let now thy Repentance be as "remarkable as thy Fall."

*Laſtly*, With this Look we muſt ſuppoſe the *Grace of Repentance* was actually beſtowed. It was not altogether the moving Language of his Maſter's Eye, but the Grace conveyed with it at the ſame time, that mollified *Peter*'s Heart, and wrought ſo ſudden and mighty a Change there. Were it not for this he had been as inſenſible to the *laſt* alarming Signal as he was to the *firſt*; and we ſhould never have heard of his going out to weep.

And the effect of this Grace appeared in the remarkable alteration of his Temper; in his

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his Modeſty, Humility and Self-diffidence, ſo contrary to his former bold, forward, confident manner. For when his Maſter, referring to *Peter*'s denying him three times, three times put this Queſtion to him, *Simon, Son of Jonas loveſt thou me?* He did not reply, "yea Lord, more than any elſe; and I "am always ready to die for thee rather "than deny thee." This had been his Language before, but it was not ſo now. He had learned to know himſelf better. But touched with the tacit Reproof, and with his former folly full in his Eye, he modeſtly returned, *Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee (d).*

Our bleſſed Lord, in his preſent Situation, had not an Opportunity of perſonal Converſe with this his fallen Apoſtle. If he had, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe he would have addreſſed him in ſome ſuch manner as hath been now deſcribed; in a way of Reproof, Compaſſion, Comfort and Exhortation. But all this he might convey with one ſteady caſt of the Eye; and doubtleſs did with that converting Look he gave him, which the Evangeliſt takes ſuch particular notice of.

(d) John xxi. 17.

of. And I queſtion not but it was in this manner that *Peter* conſtrued this Glance from his Maſter's Eye when he went out to weep. For what Look can be ſuppoſed to have a greater power to ſoften and ſubdue him than ſuch a one as this, the language of which I have now endeavoured to interpret? There is ſomething in a fixt commanding Look that is inexpreſſibly more eloquent than all the arts of Speech. There is no reſiſting the ſilent Language of the Eye when dictated by the Oratory of the Heart. And ſuch a Look undoubtedly this was which thus pierced through *Peter*'s Heart and forced all it's Sorrows through his Eyes.

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I ſhall now conclude with a few general Remarks upon the Subject. And

1. We have here a very moving Inſtance of the great Compaſſion of our bleſſed Lord to all his weak, backſliding Servants. The Tenderneſs he ſhewed to this fallen Diſciple was no ſingularity in his Temper; he is in like manner affected to them all in like Circumſtances. If *Peter*'s great Enormities were not ſufficient to alienate the Redeemer's Affections, but excited in his Heart the greater Compaſſion for him, can we ſuppoſe

that

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that the leſſer Failings of his other upright Servants, if ſincerely repented of, ſhall for ever ſeperate between him and them? What more lively Image can we have of the Redeemer's mildneſs and mercy to the unhappy Frailties of his Servants than this ſingle Circumſtance exhibits to us? *He conſiders their frame, and remembers they are Duſt.* He is not ſevere to mark their failings. He is not a ſtranger to Temptations and Trials; and therefore is *touched with a feeling of their Infirmities:* and having been tempted himſelf he knows how to pity and *ſuccour them that are tempted (e).*

And what more powerful Motive can be urged to excite them when going aſtray to return to their Duty than this, that Chriſt remembers them ſtill, is grieved for their Backſlidings, and deſires and looks and waits for their Repentance? Thus ſhould we always repreſent to ourſelves that dear Friend and Lover of our Souls; whoſe compaſſion to us his frail Creatures tabernacling in Fleſh is much greater than we can conceive or expreſs.

2. Let

(e) Heb. ii. 18.

2. Let not this Inſtance of ſaint *Peter's* Fall and ſudden Repentance lead any to make bold with Sin, or to preſume on the Grace of God for their Recovery. In reaſon, I am ſure, it ought not. But on the contrary, if we take the circumſtances of the whole Story together and duly conſider them, we ſhall ſee cauſe enough to increaſe our Guard and Vigilance. For if ſo eminent a Servant of Chriſt, ſo renowned for Fortitude and Zeal, fell ſo low, and by one incautious Step was betrayed into ſo grievous a Tranſgreſſion, alas! what have we to fear for ourſelves, who are ſo much inferior to him in Grace and ſpiritual Gifts! Do we not here ſee the bewitching, the enſnaring, the deceitful and hardening nature of Sin? Let us ſee then and tremble at the ſight of our Danger; and bleſs God that we have not yet fallen beyond Hope of Repentance. SERM. I.

This caſe of *Peter* is ſet up to us as a Seamark to warn us of the fatal Shelves. And ſhall this ſingle Inſtance of one that hath ſuffered Shipwreck there and eſcaped with Life embolden us to come near them? Would not this be extreme raſhneſs and folly? What if our bleſſed Lord did extend

ſuch

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ſuch unparalleled compaſſion to *Peter*, to recal him to repentance, let us remember he was under no Obligation to do ſo: And we have no reaſon in the world to expect that he will extend the ſame to us if we hence preſume to venture boldly on the precipice of Sin and Ruin.——If he mercifully reſtored one Diſciple that denied him, he finally gave over another that betrayed him. And if our Offences againſt this compaſſionate Saviour be deliberate, wilful, and often repeated, we have more reaſon to fear the Fate of *Judas* than to hope for the Grace of *Peter*.——Let us then dread every preſumptuous Sin as the moſt fatal Snare; leſt our Conſcience at length force us to cry out as, that cruel Perſecutor of Proteſtants, *Stephen Gardener* Biſhop of *Wincheſter* is ſaid to have done on his Death-Bed---"I have "denied Chriſt, I have ſinned with *Peter*, "but I have not repented with *Peter**."

3. From what hath been ſaid we may infer, that if Chriſt is ſo ready to reſtore backſliding Saints, he is as willing to receive repenting Sinners. He that ſhews ſo much

* *Burnet's* Hiſt. of the Reformation abridged, B. iii. p. 495.

much compaſſion for his fallen Servants, that turns ſo moving and pitying a Look after them when they are going aſtray from him, can we imagine he hath no kind regards for thoſe who are willing to come over to him? Will not the ſame Grace that reſtores the one readily receive the other? We are ſure it will. So that what hath been delivered upon this Subject is as applicable for the comfort of repenting Sinners who never came to Chriſt, as for the Encouragement of returning Saints who have unhappily wandered from him. SERM. I.

The Parable of the prodigal Son is very pertinent to this purpoſe; when he had conſumed all his Subſtance in Exceſs and Riot, and his Vice and Folly had reduced him to the extremeſt Penury, nevertheleſs upon his Return *while he was yet a great way off the Father ſaw him, had compaſſion upon him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kiſſed him* (*f*). Every word is emphatical. So the compaſſionate Saviour obſerves and takes notice of the very firſt motions of penitential Remorſe in the ſinner's Heart, and favours it by his Grace; with which if he com-



(*f*) Luke xv. 20.

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complies his Repentance is ſure, and the Arms of Chriſt are wide open to receive him.

Nay further, ſuch is the mercy of Chriſt to Sinners, and ſuch his earneſt deſire of their Repentance, that he does not ſo much as ſtay for the motions of their own mind to return to him, but he prevents them by his Grace and firſt moves them by the impreſſions of his Word and Spirit. For what elſe can be the meaning of thoſe Words? *Behold I ſtand at the Door and knock, if any any man hear my voice and open the Door, I will come in unto him, and ſup with him and he with me (g).* And when he thus invites and calls and urges Sinners to return to him, can we think that upon their return they ſhall not meet with a very kind Reception?

4. I would obſerve that though the divine Grace be the firſt and efficient cauſe of a Sinner's Repentance, yet it does not work upon his mind in a compulſive or mechanical manner, but by means of his own ſerious Thought, Reaſon and Reflection. Thus ſays *David, I thought on my ways; and turned*

(g) Rev. iii. 20.

*ed my feet unto thy Teſtimonies (b).* So the Grace of GOD which wrought ſo mightily on *Peter*, firſt ſet him on thinking and reflecting; he then retired to indulge thoſe ſerious Thoughts and Reflections, which ſoon iſſued in that penitential Sorrow expreſſed in the Words immediately following the Text. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord and he went out and wept bitterly.* SERM. I.

*Laſtly*, Notwithſtanding all the exceeding great Compaſſion of the Redeemer to thoughtleſs Sinners and revolting Saints, yet he neither will nor can ſave any without ſincere Repentance. *Peter*'s Crimes were great and aggravated, but he ſoon became ſenſible of them; and teſtified his Repentance not only by deep contrition of Soul but a remarkable change of Temper. Upon this he is reſtored to Favour, to thoſe particular marks of regard with which his Maſter had before honoured him. Had not *Peter* repented, he had periſhed in his Defection; and we ſhould have found no more notice taken of him than there is of *Judas*.



(*b*) Pſa. cxix. 59.

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The Sum of all is this. The Compaſſions of the Redeemer are beyond expreſſion; not only towards his backſliding Saints, but towards poor rebellious Sinners; that he deſires and invites their Repentance; affords them the help of his Grace and Spirit to excite good Thoughts and Motions in their Minds; and that this offered Grace is ſometimes long continued, and renewed after the moſt grievous Tranſgreſſions; but all this gives not the leaſt Encouragement to Preſumption: for if after all they remain incorrigible and impenitent, they will finally periſh notwithſtanding all that Chriſt hath done to reſtore and ſave them.

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# SERMON II.

## The Nature and Importance of Chriſtian MODERATION.

PHILIP. iv. 5.

*Let your Moderation be known unto all Men.*

SO dangerous are Extremes of every kind, and ſo apt is human nature, by the force of Cuſtom, Paſſions and Prejudice, to run into them, that a wiſe Man will make Moderation the ſtudy and purſuit of his Life. And were we to take this apoſtolic Precept for our chriſtian Motto, by which to guard our Tempers and guide our Practice univerſally, I am very much inclined to think we

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ſhould make not only a more comfortable and uniform, but a more ſpeedy progreſs towards Perfection in the chriſtian Life, than we can do by the occaſional Sallies of the moſt animated Zeal and Fervour. Becauſe, in the nature of things, *theſe* can never be laſting, *that* always is.

Far be it from me to ſay any thing that may tend in the leaſt degree to abate the genuine fervors of a holy and devout Heart, or to damp that ſacred flame in which it ſo often aſcends to GOD and Heaven: for ſure I am, the Moderation I am now about to recommend from an inſpired Apoſtle, is very conſiſtent with all the true ardors of the moſt intenſe Devotion.

The original Word (*a*) properly ſignifies Gentleneſs or Equity, or Lenity in oppoſition to *extreme Right* or the *rigor of the Law*. But as it is ſometimes taken in a more general and irreſtrictive ſenſe, our Tranſlators have therefore juſtly rendered it by the word *Moderation*; in which general Senſe I am now to conſider it. And here,

I. I

(*a*) Τὸ ἐπιεικὲς.

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I. I ſhall ſhew you what I mean by *that* Moderation which is to be the Subject of the enſuing Diſcourſe.

II. I ſhall make ſome general Remarks upon it in order to illuſtrate it's true nature and excellency.

III. I ſhall particularly recommend it to you in *four reſpects*.

I. I am to ſhew you what I mean by *that* Moderation which is to be the Subject of the enſuing Diſcourſe.

And by this I mean that Mediocrity or *Medium* that is at an equal diſtance between two faulty Extremes: that middle point in which both Truth and Virtue generally conſiſt; and in which therefore every ſincere Lover of them ſhould endeavour to fix. It is a juſt and antient Obſervation that in every thing there is a happy Mean, or that there are certain fixt Bounds which cannot be tranſgreſſed conſiſtently with a wiſe and right Conduct *(b)*. *That* middle point then which equally divides the diſtance between



*(b)* Eſt modus in rebus, ſunt certi denique fines
Quos ultra citraque nequit conſiſtere Rectum. *Hor.*

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the two Extremes is the Moderation I mean, and would now recommend.

It principally consists in proportioning our regards to Objects according to their true nature; not bestowing upon them either a less or larger share of our Esteem than is their real due. To which therefore two things are very necessary; 1. A good Understanding to distinguish the true nature and tendency of Things; that we may know what degree of our esteem they ought to have. And 2. A steady command of our Passions and Appetites; that we may not value them more or less than we know they deserve. Hence we find it true in fact that persons of the clearest Head and coolest Passions are always most distinguished for Moderation; which for that reason is a Virtue more frequently found in Age than Youth. And to a weakness of Mind in forming a wrong Judgment of things, or to the Strength of Passions in not following a right one, is owing all that Folly and Excess in Sentiments, Temper, and Conduct, which hath always disguised, and still continues too much to overbear and depress, the Inter-

ests

eſts of Truth and real Goodneſs in the World. SERM. II.

II. I am now to make ſome general Remarks upon this Virtue of Moderation, in order further to illuſtrate it's true nature and excellency. And

1. It is an eſſential Quality of almoſt all other Virtues; without which they loſe their nature, and degenerate into Enthuſiaſm, Bigottry, or Superſtition. I know but of one chriſtian Virtue that is not capable of being carried to an Extreme; and that is the Love of GOD: in which it is certain there can be no Exceſs; and wherein every pious Soul hath cauſe to lament it's great Defects. Hence then it appears

2. That Moderation is not only a Virtue, but one of the chief of all Virtues. And as all Virtue lies between two Extremes, ſo Moderation itſelf, as a chriſtian Virtue, lies in the Mean between Lukewarmneſs on the one ſide, and intemperate Zeal on the other. And in proportion as it advances to either of theſe Extremes it forfeits both it's Name and Quality *(b)*.

3. Hence

(*b*) Virtus eſt mediam vitiorum, et utrinque reductum. HOR.

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3. Hence we ſee the reaſon that Virtue ſo often puts on the appearance of Vice, and Vice the appearance of Virtue. Not that there are no certain Bounds that part them: but they ſometimes approach ſo near to each other, that it is not eaſy for a ſuperficial Eye to diſtinguiſh them. Becauſe Vice which lies in the Extreme, as conſcious of it's native Turpitude, is very ready to claim Alliance with and to aſſume the name of the Virtue that lies in the Mean. And moreover, when a man runs into a Vice on one Extreme, he hath ſometimes ſuch an Abhorrence of that which lies on the other, that he is apt to call Virtue itſelf by the name of it; imagining that, though it lies in the mean, yet it has not receded far enough from the Vice which appears to him ſo odious. Thus true Religion itſelf, which is at an equal Diſtance between Superſtition and Impiety, is nevertheleſs often called by the ſuperſtitious Man Profaneneſs, and by the profane Man Superſtition. And hence it is, as the Prophet obſerves, that men *put Evil for Good, and Good for Evil; and call Darkneſs Light, and Light Darkneſs (c).*

For

(c) Iſai. v. 20.

For the ſame reaſon it is ſometimes very difficult to diſtinguiſh between Truth and Error; not only becauſe they often appear very near each other, but becauſe the Errors in both Extremes are very fond of diſguiſing themſelves under the name of the Truth that lies in the Middle; and the Error in one Extreme ſtigmatiſes Truth with the name of that Error which lies in the oppoſite; for with undiſtinguiſhing minds there is a mighty force in falſe names. Therefore whatever Extremes men run into, whilſt they continue in them, they are equally Enemies to Moderation, for no other reaſon than becauſe it will not be drawn into any.

4. Moderation is that which in a right courſe or ſtate of things attracts to itſelf the two Extremes that are equally diſtant from it. Not that it always or indeed often has this effect; becauſe it's power is weakened by the force of bad Paſſions and Prejudices, which more ſtrongly attract the mind to Extremes. But, I ſay, it has this natural Tendency: and were it not for that contrary force would certainly have this effect. Which, by the way, accounts for that ſtrange

Phæno-

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Phænominon ſo often obſerved in the moral World, *viz*, that men ſo often fly from one Extreme directly to another, without ſo much as ſtopping at the Middle where they ought to reſt. The reaſon is this. It is Ignorance, Pride, Paſſion or Prejudice that draws men to any particular Extreme: or perhaps ſeveral of theſe united. But now, when theſe are removed, and their attractive force taken off, *that* of reaſon and evidence takes place, which, together with a ſhame of continuing in an Error ſo long, draws the mind ſo ſtrongly the other way, that in the Hurry of the Receſs, like a vibrating Weight or Pendulum, it immediately paſſes over the middle Point to almoſt an equal Diſtance on the other ſide.

5. We muſt always take care to diſtinguiſh between Moderation as a conſtitutional Temper, and a moral Quality. And I know of no better way to diſtinguiſh them than this. Moderation, when it is only a conſtitutional Temper is too apt to verge towards Lukewarmneſs; and diſpoſes a man to be too unconcerned and indifferent in matters of great Importance, and even to countenance Sin by a total forbearance of the

the moſt reaſonable Reproof. But Moderation, as it is a chriſtian Grace or a moral Quality, though it is not cenſorious or ſevere in little things, yet it can teſtify a juſt Abhorrence of thoſe wicked Notions or Practices of Men which are plainly injurious to the honour of GOD and Religion: and is equally diſtant from a ſinful Lukewarmneſs and a ſuperſtitious Zeal. SERM. II.

6. Moderation, where it is not merely conſtitutional or mechanical but founded on right principles, is always the mark of a great and noble mind. Weak and little minds are ever moſt prone to Exceſſes. And the reaſon is plain; becauſe they are moſt ſubject to thoſe violent Paſſions and Prejudices whereby they are naturally drawn into Extremes, and rendered inſenſible that they are ſo. And in ſome caſes eſpecially, Moderation ſhews great Magnanimity; for Inſtance, when it is maintained in oppoſition to the Bias of Self-intereſt, Example, and a natural Temper.

7. Moderation is a Virtue which the ordinary Courſe of nature, the uſual methods of GOD's moral Government, and the univerſal Conſtitution of things, are continually

ally teaching us. We ſee no Extremes in the World of Nature. The univerſal Frame of it is ſupported, and the ordinary Courſe of it preſerved, by the due temperament of the Elements, and by a moderate Supply of thoſe things which are neceſſary to its Preſervation; an exceſs of which would prove it's Deſtruction. Our Body and Mind are of ſuch a Make as to be incapable of enduring long Extremes. Were but one humour of the Body or one paſſion of the Mind to be let looſe or increaſed to exceſs, how ſoon would it bring on the Diſſolution of the whole Frame! And in GOD's Government of the moral World, how ſeldom does he go to Extremes! even when the Wickedneſs of men call for the ſevereſt Examples of his Juſtice!

8. Moderation is the Source of Tranquility. It keeps the Mind cool, content and calm: free from thoſe Perturbations and Solicitudes which neceſſarily ariſe from all kind of Exceſs, eſpecially from exceſſive Paſſions: and equally contributes to Health of Body and Peace of Mind; neither of which can be long preſerved where Intemperance is indulged. Our calmeſt pleaſures

are

are moſt ſubſtantial, our moderate Satisfactions moſt durable. 'Tis an Obſervation very true, and common to a Proverb, that *Extremes are never laſting.* Our minds cannot bear a violent Agitation for any conſiderable time. Hence the higheſt Elevations are often ſucceeded by the loweſt Depreſſions; as the higheſt Tide is followed by the loweſt Ebb. In both which unnatural Extremes the mind often loſes it's Self-poſſeſſion, and with that it's Content and Peace. SERM. II.

*Laſtly*, Moderation is very ſubſervient to our Advantage and Uſefulneſs in many reſpects. It preſerves an habitual Aptitude and Diſpoſition to the duties of Life and Religion; and that not only to the ordinary and ſtated ones, but to thoſe which are extraordinary and occaſional. Whereas an immoderate Engagement of the mind to any particular Object, often renders it indiſpoſed to the moſt important Employments.

It is a great help to the Judgment, and of unſpeakable Advantage in ſearching out Truth. When the Paſſions and Powers of the mind are equally poiſed, it is then moſt capable

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capable of determining the exact weight and value of Truth, and of diſcerning the difference between two Propoſitions, and the Conſequences of them, which to a confuſed and wrong-biaſed mind may appear the ſame.

It conciliates the Favour, the Friendſhip, the Eſteem and Confidence of men. Men of moderation are generally choſen as Arbitrators to reconcile Differences; being uſually eſteemed men of ſolid Senſe, ſound Judgment, and unprejudiced Underſtanding; and conſequently more capable than others of diſcerning and doing the thing that is right.

But above all, it is of the moſt important Service in the religious Life. It is our beſt guard againſt Errors which always lie in the Extreme. It's gentle Influences form the Mind to Love, Meekneſs, Goodneſs, Patience, Forbearance and Peace, the diſtinguiſhing Characteriſticks of the Chriſtian Temper. It ſecures the Soul from many Temptations, and preſerves it under many more: and beſt prepares it for the Inhabitation of the holy Spirit, the divine Author

thor of all our ſpiritual Life, and Peace and Joy. SERM. II.

III. This MODERATION I am now to recommend to you eſpecially in four reſpects; *viz.*

With regard to the Purſuits of Life, the Profeſſion of Piety, the Paſſions of the Mind, and the Principles of Religion.

1. With regard to the Purſuits of Life. The uſual Objects of which are the *Pleaſures* and the *Profits* of the World.

1. We are to ſhew our Moderation in our purſuits of worldly *Pleaſures*. And in regard of theſe we ſhould moderate our *Expectations* from them and our *Indulgence* to them.

1. We ſhould moderate our *Expectations* from them. I very much queſtion whether any of us ever enjoyed a ſenſitive Delight which fully anſwered all our Expectations. They who are moſt eager after theſe kind of Pleaſures, I am confident never did. In no one Inſtance is the Imagination more apt to deceive us, or to out-run our Reaſon which it always ought to follow. And rejecting the Conduct of Reaſon, and follow-

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ing that of Fancy is the true Source of all our Diſappointments. A Deception, by which the Mind that is bent on worldly Pleaſures is continually befooled, and of which it is almoſt ever inſenſible. But the truth is; we create to ourſelves the Diſappointments we complain of; and loſe the true reliſh of our ſenſitive Satisfactions by expecting too much from them. "For (as "a late excellent Author obſerves) He that "loves any Good more than it is worth, "can never be happy in the Enjoyment "of it. Becauſe he thinks there is more in "it than he finds; and ſo is always diſap-"pointed in the Fruition of it. And the "Grief of being diſappointed of what he "expects, does commonly countervail the "Pleaſure of what he finds and enjoys. Whilſt "he is in the Purſuit of any Good which "he inordinately doats on, he is all Imagi-"nation and Deſire; his Heart ſwells with "fantaſtick Joy and boundleſs Hope; but "when he is poſſeſſed of it, and finds how "vaſtly the Enjoyment falls ſhort of the "Expectation, his Pleaſure is preſently loſt "in the Diſappointment, and ſo he remains "as unſatisfied as ever. And thus, if he

"was

" was to ſpend an Eternity in ſuch Purſuits
" and Enjoyments, his Life would be no-
" thing but an everlaſting Succeſſion of Ex-
" pectations and Diſappointments. So that
" all inordinate Affection deſtroys it's own
" Satisfaction; and neceſſarily renders us
" by ſo many degrees miſerable as it ex-
" ceeds the real Worth and Value of things,
" *(d)*."

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But what is ſtrange is, that a man's daily Experience of this ſhould not make him wiſer. Theſe are called *deceitful* Pleaſures; but the Deception does not lie ſo much in them as in ourſelves. 'Tis becauſe we expect too much from them, that we are diſappointed by them; and that is the way to be diſappointed in every thing. In a word, we cannot expect too little from the World, nor too much from GOD. The way to true Peace and Happineſs then is to enlarge our Deſires towards him, and moderate them towards all earthly things.

2. We ſhould be moderate in our *Indulgence* to thoſe Pleaſures which ſo often diſappoint the Expectation, and that very diſappointment, one would think, ſhould effec-



*(d) Scot's* Chriſt. Life. Vol. 1. p. 56.

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tually induce us hereunto. But in fact we find it too ſeldom does. Men ſtill deſire them as ardently and indulge them as freely as if they found in them all their Heart could wiſh: though an exceſſive Indulgence to them robs us of their true Enjoyment no leſs than an inordinate Deſire of them. Worldly Pleaſure is too luſcious a Cup to drink deep of: and too large a Draught will make us ſick. A man that ſtudies only the gratification of Senſe and Appetite, or makes Pleaſure his Buſineſs, is like one who makes new Wine his conſtant Liquor, or who lives on no Food but Sweet-meats: the former of which will ſoon intoxicate, and the other ſurfeit him; but will neither give him the exquiſite Reliſh which another has in the moderate uſe of them, nor afford him that regular ſupply of Strength and Spirits which is received from a more plain and ſimple Diet.

The truth of this Obſervation is founded on univerſal Experience. The plain Conſequence from which is, that an immoderate Deſire after, and an exceſſive Indulgence to, the Pleaſures of Senſe, is Folly in the higheſt degree. Becauſe it fruſtrates

trates it's own End, ſubjects the Soul to a perpetual Diſappointment, chains it down to thoſe Pleaſures which can never make it happy, at the ſame time that it gives it a Diſreliſh of thoſe which only can. In which view, Moderation and Temperance in the uſe of ſenſual Pleaſures appears to be a point of undiſputed Wiſdom and Importance. SERM. II.

And I am ſorry I am obliged to mention another Conſequence equally certain, *viz.* that were the prevailing Taſte of the preſent Age, with all the low and vain Amuſements which are now in ſuch general Requeſt, amongſt men of almoſt every Rank, to be particularly deſcribed and faithfully recorded, we ſhould appear to Poſterity (to our ſhame be it ſaid) the moſt unwiſe, the moſt trifling, the moſt thoughtleſs and unimportant Generation of Men that this Iſland hath perhaps ever produced in one Age, *(e)*. Even in Pleaſures lawful and innocent, exceſs is not only dangerous but criminal; becauſe it is not only a great waſte of Time, but too much ſoftens the Mind.



*(e)* ——————pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Et dici potuiſſe et non potuiſſe refelli. OVID.

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What ſhall we ſay then to an unbounded and univerſal Paſſion for Pleaſures hardly lawful, nay plainly criminal, not only in their Tendency but in their own nature? What can be expected from a Perſon ſo intirely devoted to the vaineſt Amuſements? The ſame Effects may be expected from a People, immerſed in the ſame Gulf of Vanity, *viz.* an ungenerous, unmanly Spirit, a creeping ſervile Taſte, Contempt of Diſcipline and Decorum, Impatience of mental Labour, an Averſion to all the Reſtraints of Honour, Conſcience and Religion, an Imbecility of Mind, and univerſal Diſſoluteneſs of Manners. Theſe are the genuine Effects of an ungoverned Paſſion for ſenſual Pleaſures, and the well-known Characteriſticks of thoſe that are enſlaved by them. And unleſs by ſome kind Interpoſal of Providence the Taſte of the preſent Age be mended in this Inſtance, we have reaſon to dread the Effects it is like to have upon the next.

2. We muſt govern ourſelves by the ſame Rule with reſpect to the *Profits* as well as the *Pleaſures* of the World. A moderate purſuit of the profits of Life is no leſs lawful than a moderate uſe of it's Pleaſures.

It

It is the Exceſs in both caſes that makes the Crime. So neceſſary is that ſcripture Maxim, *uſing the World as not abuſing it*, (*f*).

An intemperate Deſire of worldly Gain and an exceſſive Love of worldly Pleaſures, though they are different Paſſions and ſeldom meet in the ſame Perſon, yet are attended with equally bad Effects. They both ſenſualiſe, infeeble debaſe and inſlave the mind, and render it indiſpoſed to thoſe great and important Views and Offices to which it's noble and rational nature was originally fitted, and for which it was deſigned.

The Apoſtle *Paul* tells *Timothy* that Covetouſneſs, which he calls *the Love of Money*, is the *Root of all Evil*, (*g*). The Truth of which Maxim is atteſted by the moſt common Obſervation. And ſome of the Fruits which ſpring from this evil Root the Apoſtle there ſpecifies, e. g. this reſtleſs and unbounded Paſſion for Wealth throws a man into infinite Temptations and Entanglements, leads him into the moſt ridiculous meaſures and the moſt deſtructive Vices, diſſolves the Ties of Conſcience and the Obligations of Religion, torments the Soul with the



(*f*) 1 Cor. vii. 31. (*g*) 1 Tim. vi. 10.

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most vexatious Solicitudes, and finally *drowns it in Deſtruction and Perdition.* Now after ſo fair a Warning, and ſo full a Deſcription of the fatal effects of this Sin, one would be ready to believe that Chriſtians would be more afraid of it than of any other. But is it ſo? So far from it that there is ſcarce any Sin that is more excuſed or leſs feared; or of which even good men are more guilty, or leſs ſenſible.

There is another Text of Scripture which ſo plainly deſcribes the deſtructive Effects of an inordinate Love of the Pleaſures and Profits of the World, as makes the duty of Moderation in this reſpect appear in a Light of indiſpenſable Importance. And that is, 1 John xi. 15. *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World; if any man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* That is, an ungoverned Paſſion either for the Pleaſures or Profits of this World is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Love of GOD. GOD and *Mammon* are too oppoſite to reign in the ſame Heart. As we deſire to love GOD more, we muſt love the World leſs; and with regard to all the Pleaſures and Pro-

fits

fits of it *let our Moderation be known unto all men.* SERM. II.

Under this Head I have hitherto been ſpeaking of Moderation only as it regards one Extream, *viz.* a too eager Purſuit of the World. There is another, not ſo common indeed, but as inconſiſtent with the Moderation I am now recommending, as that which I have been juſt ſpeaking of; which therefore ought not to be paſſed over without remark. I mean an affected neglect or a total contempt of the World. I diſtinguiſh between theſe, becauſe I am very much diſpoſed to think that what ſome men call a Mortification to the World, and would have it to be thought ſo in them, is only *affected* or *perſonated*; and that they are not ſo abſolutely indifferent to all the Pleaſures and Concerns of Life as they would have others to believe they are. However, if they are, it is a Fault in them. Such a total Unconcernedneſs about the World whilſt we have Affairs, Intereſts, and Concerns in it to mind for our own Advantage and the Good of others, is a Weakneſs altogether inexcuſable, and renders a Chriſtian's

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an's Character, however excellent in other reſpects, very defective and unamiable.

Such perſons ſhould conſider, that if they are not *of* the World, they are *in* it; they are not Angels, but Men; and that a total abſtractedneſs from the World is not expected from them, till they are wholly out of it. There are ſocial as well as divine Virtues; duties we owe to Men, as well as duties we owe to GOD; and the former as well as the latter are to be done out of regard to GOD. So that a neglect of relative and ſocial Duties is a contempt of the Authority of GOD who requires them: and it is a miſtake to think that there is no Piety in ſocial Virtue; or that GOD is not ſometimes as acceptably ſerved and as much honoured in the Shop as in the Church, by Diligence in our Secular, as by Zeal in our ſpiritual Affairs. But they who run away from the World, ſhut themſelves up in Convents and Cloiſters, and withdraw themſelves intirely from all the Duties they owe the Publick, do more eſpecially incur this Cenſure of running into Extremes.

II. We

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II. We ſhould apply the Rule in the Text to our *Profeſſion* of Piety; becauſe in this alſo men are very apt to go into Extremes.

Of true Piety there can be no Exceſs: but of the Shew and Profeſſion of it there may. Which is an Extreme to which ſome are inclined, whilſt others run into the direct contrary, and ſeem aſhamed of almoſt every thing that has the leaſt appearance of Religion out of the Church.

1. Then let not our Profeſſion of Religion be too high. This is no unneceſſary Caution; and, one would think, ſhould be no very difficult Leſſon. When a man makes a very high Profeſſion of Religion he means, and he deſires that others ſhould think, he hath as much Religion as he profeſſes. But if upon further View they obſerve that his religious Character does indeed fall very ſhort of his Profeſſion, they will be ready to impute the whole to mere Affectation and Grimace; and think of him as much lower as he would have them think higher of him than he deſerves.

By a high Profeſſion of Religion I don't mean a ſteady Attachment to the Precepts and

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and Principles of the Goſpel, in oppoſition to abounding Profaneneſs and Infidelity. For in this ſenſe our Profeſſion cannot be too high. That is, our Adherence to the Goſpel cannot be too ſtedfaſt. But by a high Profeſſion of Religion I mean a high and uncommon Eſteem for the outward and more ſhowy parts of Religion (commonly called the *Religion of the means*, or more properly the *means of Religion*) a Zeal for little things both in points of Practice and Doctrine, an Oſtentation of religious Knowledge, a Forwardneſs to talk of religious Subjects in all Companies, and to cenſure thoſe that do not come up exactly to their Standard. Such a Turn is very obſerveable in ſome perſons, more diſtinguiſhed for warm Zeal than ſolid Judgment. This is what I mean by a high Profeſſion of Religion. And whatever reſemblance it may have to Phariſaical Vanity and Oſtentation, I doubt not but many pious and valuable Chriſtians may be found in this Claſs; who have been long accuſtomed to this zealous way, without being ſenſible of the bad Effects it ſometimes has, or the Indiſcretions into which it often betrays them.

But

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But to what purpoſe now is this high and warm and forward Profeſſion and Show of Religion? The World will always expect a Man's Religion to be equal to his Profeſſion. And if after all he is found very defective, either with regard to his Temper or Conduct, not only his own Character but Religion itſelf will ſuffer the more for the high Profeſſion he made of it: eſpecially in the Opinion of the weaker part of Mankind, who will be always ready to impute the Blemiſhes of the moſt zealous Profeſſors of Religion to the Influence which Religion itſelf has upon their mind and temper.

In this caſe Moderation will teach us not to be over-liberal of our Cenſures even towards thoſe who may poſſibly beſtow too many upon us; but to remember the Candor and Charity to which the Goſpel binds us; that the Weakneſſes of good men are oftentimes the moſt obvious part of their Character; and though they do not repreſent Religion in that ingaging and lovely Light, in which the Goſpel ſets it, yet with all their Imperfections they may poſſibly exceed us in ſome of the moſt important parts of the Chriſtian Life and Temper. Therefore

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fore inſtead of cenſuring them let us ſee to it that our own Profeſſion and Practice be all of a Piece; that whilſt we are continually endeavouring after higher Attainments in true Chriſtianity, we ſtill profeſs to be no more than what we are.

2. In order to avoid this Extreme ſome have fallen into the direct Contrary; and make as much too low as others make too high a profeſſion of Piety: the one acting under the Influence of a too cold and flegmatick, and the other under that of a too warm and ſanguine Conſtitution. Some to keep clear of the Imputation of Hypocriſy and ſpiritual Pride, are afraid to diſcover any marks of a devout and pious Spirit, unleſs it be by a conſtant attendance on the publick worſhip of GOD, and a peaceable Obſervance of the Chriſtian Precepts. Either through a conſcious Inability or a Backwardneſs contracted by a long Diſuſe, they have no Inclination at all to religious Converſe, even before intimate Friends who are willing to lead it: and moſt of all averſe to give Reproof, even when it is moſt ſeaſonable and neceſſary; leſt they ſhould be thought

thought too preciſe, unmannered and aſſuming. And thus through an exceſſive tenderneſs for their own Character they diſcover a real Defect in it, and betray the cauſe of GOD and Truth when they are called by Providence to appear in the Defence of it.

This is the Unhappineſs, I doubt not, of many *good* Chriſtians: who by men of a contrary Caſt are often marked out for Lukewarm Profeſſors; as they themſelves are by *theſe*, for perſons of a ſuperſtitious and enthuſiaſtick Spirit.

Moderation now will teach us to avoid this Extreme with as much care as the other: and will never permit us to ſacrifice Conſcience to Complaiſance, or the Honour of GOD, to the Humours of men; but will embolden us to vindicate the affronted cauſe of GOD, and to give a ſharp Reproof too, when bareſaced Profaneneſs or Immorality makes it neceſſary: nor will it ſuffer us to omit any fit or proper Opportunity of doing or ſaying any thing that is likely to be of ſervice to the ſpiritual Intereſts of others.

And whilſt Moderation thus guards us againſt both Extremes, it caſts a friendly

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Eye at the ſame time on thoſe who are unhappily betrayed into them; and aims to learn ſomething from both. From the former, the man of Moderation learns to correct the Defects of his Zeal, and endeavours after more Spirit and Life in Religion: and from the latter, he learns Judgment, Solidity and Prudence. He will not charge the one with Vanity nor the other with Formality. But whilſt he endeavours to keep clear of both Extremes by viewing them in Contraſt, he is thankful that the Providence of GOD hath ſo formed the Complexion of his Mind, and ſo ordered the Circumſtances of his Life, that he never lay under thoſe Temptations which others do of running into either.

SER-

# SERMON III.

## The Nature and Importance of Chriſtian MODERATION.

PHILIP. iv. 5.

*Let your Moderation be known unto all Men.*

I Have already opened the nature and importance of this great Duty of Moderation, as it conſiſts in a juſt Medium between two faulty Extremes, and is generally the ſeat of Truth and Virtue. I propoſed to recommend it eſpecially in four reſpects, *viz.* as it reſpected the *Purſuits* of Life, the *Profeſſion* of Piety, the *Paſſions* of the Mind, and the *Principles* of Religion.

The two firſt of theſe I have already diſpatched. I proceed now immediately to recommend it to you in another view, *viz.* as it reſpects the *Paſſions* of the Mind; the due regulation of which is a matter of mighty Importance, and wherein more of our Duty and Happineſs conſiſts than moſt perſons think; and which can never be neglected conſiſtently with a pure and peaceful Conſcience.

In treating this Branch of the Subject I propoſe to ſhew

I. The great Importance of keeping the Paſſions under right Government.

II. In what manner this is to be done in order to preſerve a peace of Mind and Purity of Heart.

I. I am to ſhew you the great Importance of keeping the Paſſions under right Government.

And the neceſſity of Moderation with regard to all the Paſſions of the mind in general appears from hence, *viz.* that if they are not kept clear of Extremes they are exceedingly hurtful; if confined within due Bounds,

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Bounds, exceedingly uſeful to all the beſt purpoſes of Life and Religion.

1. If the Paſſions be not kept clear of Extremes they are very hurtful.

Now the two Extremes we ſhould here avoid are thoſe of *Defect* and *Exceſs*.

1. Some are extremely *defective* in their *pathetick* Senſations. Their Paſſions ſink too low: and having more flegm than fire in their Conſtitutions they are ſeldom ever warm; at leaſt are oftentimes not ſo much affected as they ought to be. There is no coming at the Springs of their mind. Or if, by an Addreſs animated with unuſual Spirit, they are a little moved, the Emotion is ſomewhat unnatural: they do not like it; and are better pleaſed with a Diſcourſe altogether diſpaſſionate and argumentative. Such perſons are apt to drag on too heavily in the ways of Holineſs, and degenerate into Lukewarmneſs. They are like a Ship whoſe Ballaſt is too much in proportion to it's Sails; which therefore makes it's way very ſlowly towards the intended Harbour.

This now is doubtleſs an Extreme, though not ſo common, nor attended with ſo great Diſadvantages as the contrary one. And it

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is to be feared that we are all of us but too chargeable with this extreme defect of Paſſion, when GOD and Heaven and our Eternal Intereſts are the Objects. For where is the Man who can ſay, he finds that intenſe Love, that holy Fear, that deep Reverence, that heavenly Joy, that ſupreme Delight, in thinking of GOD and praying to him, which thoſe ſacred Employments of the mind ought always to inſpire? I ſay ought *always* to inſpire; the calmeſt reaſon being Judge. But what is worſt of all is, that thoſe very minds which are all Life, Spirit, and Ardor towards the World, are ſo dead and dull and motionleſs towards their Maker. But

2. The moſt hurtful and dangerous Extreme is the *Exceſs* of the Paſſions. When they are too ſenſible and too ſtrong; that is, excited too ſoon aud riſe too high. The mind is then like a Ship that hath more Sail than Ballaſt; which requires a ſkilful Hand at the Helm, otherwiſe a briſk Gale will ſoon overſet it.

The ill Conſequences of giving a looſe to the Paſſions when they are naturally too warm and violent, are theſe.—They throw a Bias on the leading Powers of the mind: wreſt

wreſt the Reins out of the Hands of Reaſon, or refuſe it's Check: render the mind obſtinate and unconvinceable: betray it into a thouſand Dangers; and leave it unguarded there: toſs it ſuddenly from the moſt pleaſing to the moſt painful Senſations, according to the nature of the Paſſion that predominates: keep the mind unfixed, volatile and always changing: raiſe the wildeſt Diſorders in it: expoſe it to the moſt cruel Torments; which ſometimes terminate in Frenſy, Diſtraction, or Death.

What good Purpoſes in Life now can that man either form or purſue, who gives himſelf up to the Impetuoſity of his blind and ungoverned Affections? As well may a feather keep a ſteady courſe in a Tempeſt, as the mind purſue a right way amidſt all this Whirlwind of the Paſſions. For, to carry the Metaphor a little farther, it is peculiar to thoſe Hurricanes of the mind to make it more light and volatile at the ſame time that they ſpend their Rage upon it.

But never do exceſſive Paſſions produce worſe Effects than when they put on the

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Garb of Religion, and yet are unſanctified, unreſtrained and lawleſs. Then is Chriſtianity moſt of all diſguiſed; the Saint tranſformed into a Fiend; Piety made a Cloke for Villany, and an Inſtrument of Cruelty; and the beſt Religion in the World repreſented as the worſt and moſt pernicious, under all the miſhapen and frightful forms of Bigotry, Superſtition and Frenſy. What Rivers of Blood have been ſhed by a falſe, Religious Zeal! which is nothing in the World elſe than violent Paſſions unſanctified and ungoverned; flaming in defence of Trifles, or ſomething worſe, and conſuming the beſt of men in it's Flames. Witneſs *the Souls of them that have been ſlain for the word of* GOD, *and for the Teſtimony which they held, crying under the Altar with a loud Voice, ſaying, how long,* O LORD GOD *holy and true, doſt thou not judge and avenge our Blood on them that dwell on the Earth (a)!* Such are the effects of intemperate Paſſions in Religious matters, uncorrected by Grace or Law or Conſcience. How have the beſt and wiſeſt of the Sons of men in every Age fallen Victims to a falſe Zeal! What Deeds of

(a) Rev. vi. 10.

of Horror have been perpetrated by it on the Face of the Earth! Ambition never drenched it more in Blood and Carnage; or hardened the Hearts of it's Votaries more againſt the Impreſſions of Humanity. *O, my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, to their Aſſemblies, mine Honour, be not thou united (b)!*

But when violent Paſſions under the Appearance of Religious Zeal do not go theſe Lengths, either through want of Power, or through fear of Men, yet they ſharpen and canker the Spirit, throw a Virulence into the Heart, baniſh from it all chriſtian Love and Goodneſs, excite endleſs Animoſities, Heart-burnings, Envies, Strife, and moſt unbrotherly Malevolence, and intirely extinguiſh the true Spirit of Chriſtianity.



*(b)* Who-ever carefully reads over the Church Hiſtory of the fourth, fifth and ſixth Centuries, and the Papal Hiſtory ſince the Eſtabliſhment of the Inquiſition, particularly, the 2d Volume of *Bower's* Hiſtory of the Popes, and the 4 Volumes of *Brandt's* Hiſtory of the Reformation in the *Low-Countries*, and there conſiders the ſpreading Miſchiefs of a blind and bigotted Zeal, laid open in dreadful Facts, I am perſuaded will excuſe the warmth of this Language, and will not look upon any Expreſſions of a Deteſtation of ſuch a Spirit as too much animated.

This falſe Zeal hath three invariable Characteriſticks by which you may ever diſtinguiſh it from a true Religious one: and they are theſe.

1. It flames the higheſt in defence of little things; an abſtruſe Speculation, an unimportant Notion, a uſeleſs Ceremony, a mode of Expreſſion, and (not ſeldom) a ſingle Word, and even that neither ſcriptural nor intelligible, have often raiſed the moſt deſtructive Feuds.

2. It ſinks proportionably in it's regards to eſſential Goodneſs, and the indiſpenſable Obligations of moral Duty. And

3. The hotteſt Zeal is commonly found on the ſide of Falſhood and Deluſion. But the moſt terrible Combuſtions are excited by the Contention of oppoſite Errors, or when the two Extremes happen to claſh together; and then Love, Moderation and Truth, which lie in the middle between them are either buried in the Smoak or conſumed in the Flames they raiſe. All Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory from the earlieſt times of Chriſtianity down to our preſent Day do but too plainly confirm theſe melancholy Obſer-

Obſervations. They are Fact; and tis our Grief and Shame that they are ſo. SERM. III.

Of ſuch vaſt Conſequence then is it to ſee that our Paſſions be kept under due Regulations with regard to Religious matters; and that the real Importance of things be the Meaſure of our Zeal: leſt on the one hand, we ſink into Lukewarmneſs in relation to the eſſential points of the Chriſtian Faith and Practice, and ſo betray the cauſe and honour of Chriſt by our Indifference; or on the other, grow too warm in the Defence of the minuteſt matters, and ſo be carried under the ſhow of a Religious Zeal to act a part very unworthy the Chriſtian Name and Character.

II. Moderation with regard to the Paſſions is a Duty of great Importance, becauſe when kept under due regulation they are very ſerviceable to all the beſt purpoſes of Life and Religion.

When the Paſſions are once tamed, diſciplined and well managed, they are ſo far from being dangerous and pernicious that they are of unſpeakable Advantage to us. When Wiſdom and Truth have the Direction

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tion of them they carry us with as much ſpeed the right way, as they do the wrong under the Guidance of Folly and Falſhood.

This Maxim is univerſally true; with reference to our preſent as well as our future Intereſts: But at this time I ſhall confine it to the latter; and briefly ſhew you the happy Influence which the right Government of the Paſſions has on our Religious Character and Improvements.

True Religion you know conſiſts in right Knowledge and right Practice. The Paſſions when well diſciplined and directed are very ſubſervient to both.

1. They are very ſubſervient to right Knowledge: or of great Advantage to us in our ſearch after Truth. Becauſe they keep the mind in the beſt Diſpoſition both to *find* and *retain* it.

When the Paſſions are properly equipoiſed the mind is then in the beſt Diſpoſition to ſeek and *find out* the Truth. Becauſe thus ballanced it is in no danger of running into Extremes; but keeps always about the Middle where the Truth generally lies. Well tempered Paſſions keep the mind not only intent and ſteady, but at the ſame time active

tive and clear. When it is totally unimpaſſioned it is apt to grow indolent and languid; incapable of that Patience and Labour which are ſometimes neceſſary for the Diſcovery of Truth. On the other hand, when the Paſſions are too quick and vigorous, they are apt to mingle with our Diſquiſitions, obſtruct our reaſoning, throw a falſe Light upon Objects and lead us wrong. But when they are juſtly moderated they have ſtrength and warmth enough to animate our Powers, but not ſo much as to overſet or miſguide them. And to theſe two Extremes I believe, it is generally owing, that they who aim at the Truth ſo often miſs it; the one for want of Vigour fall ſhort of it; the other through too much over-ſhoot it. SERM. III.

This Moderation of the Paſſions is of equal ſervice to us in *retaining* the Truth when found. Becauſe the mind hereby becomes more ſtedfaſt and unwavering, and better eſtabliſhed than it can be when the Paſſions bear too much Sway or none at all. In both which caſes it is too little guarded, and conſequently more eaſily ſeduced. And ſuch is our Make, that the Mind in any one Extreme is really more in

danger

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danger of the other than when it is in the Middle between them both: becauſe here it is more ſteadily fixed by two oppoſite Attractions.

Theſe Obſervations, though perhaps too ſpeculative for ſome Taſtes, are certainly important and uſeful; and evidently ſhew how great an Influence the Moderation of our Paſſions has upon our Improvements in right Knowledge. I ſhall be more plain and practical in ſhewing you the vaſt Influence it has on our Improvements in the Religious Life and Temper. Therefore

2. The due Government of the Paſſions is very ſubſervient to a right Practice as well as a right Knowledge.

The Paſſions of a truly wiſe and pious mind are regular and holy: Reaſon diſciplines, and Religion ſanctifies them: *that* directs their Exerciſe, and *this* their Object; in proportion to the Importance of which, both concur to exalt them.

Now to ſhew the happy Influence which the Paſſions thus diſciplined and ſanctified have upon the Religious Life and Temper, I ſhall briefly inſtance in three the moſt pleaſing ones, together with their Oppoſites.

And

And they are, *Love*, *Joy*, and *Hope*, together with *Indignation*, *Sorrow* and *Fear*. When theſe Paſſions are ſanctified, the ſupreme Object of the three firſt is God, and of the three laſt is Sin. And, O! what a ſpeedy Progreſs does the Soul make towards Heaven, mounted on the Wings of theſe ſanctified Affections! SERM. III.

1. Let us ſuppoſe the *Love* of God regularly prevails in the Soul. Not as an uncertain tranſient Blaze, ſometimes in and ſometimes out, but as a conſtant ſteady Flame, which at once warms, enlightens, chears and exalts the Heart. Under the Influence of this chriſtian Grace, how viſible and vigorous is the Growth of the divine Life! How delightful and eaſy the duties of Devotion! How connatural and deſireable every pious Employment! Love makes every Office delightful that is pleaſing to it's Object; and every thing to appear hateful that offends it. So that in proportion to our Love of God will be our hatred of Sin. They riſe and fall together. And perhaps we cannot have a ſurer Mark by which to know our Love to God than our hatred of Sin: provided that Hatred be uniform and univer-

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univerſal; and be leveled againſt Sin as Sin. For a man may hate ſome Sins to which his nature is not ſo much inclined, and by which he hath ſuffered, and yet his Heart be in Love with others, and at Enmity with GOD. But when our hatred of Sin is habitual and univerſal, it is a certain ſign of a true principle of divine Love. Becauſe that proceeds from this, and is the genuine Effect of it.

2. How happy is the Soul when exalted with divine *Joy!* How ſuperlative it's Views and Satisfactions! How far ſuperior to thoſe of ſenſe and nature! to enjoy GOD! the quickening Grace and comfortable Influences of his Spirit! to taſte the Tokens of his Love, and feel his Favour! O, how far does this ſurpaſs all the Joys that mere animal nature is capable of receiving! and is what none but the renewed nature can have any Ideas of. With what an Ardor does the Soul ſpring towards GOD, and with what a fixed immoveable Adheſion does it centre in Him, the Object of it's moſt divine Delight! But with what a painful Tenderneſs does it pity thoſe noble and immortal Souls, which are made capable of theſe ſublime Satisfactions,

Satisfactions, and yet chained down to the moſt mean and debaſing Pleaſures! and with what Grief and Sorrow does the Chriſtian inſpired with this ſacred paſſion behold the Multitude of thoſe who are at enmity with him whom *he* thus ſupremely loves! forſaking him whom *he* moſt earneſtly deſires, and affronting him whom *he* delights to pleaſe! SERM. III.

But ſtill more deep are the Sorrows of the pious chriſtian's Heart when he conſiders how often he himſelf inadvertently offends Him whom his Soul loveth: that ſo much Carnality, Guilt and Folly ſtill beſet him; which ſo often depreſs, weaken and bewilder him: that the Fleſh ſtill luſteth againſt the Spirit: that he is ſtill ſo unlike the divine Object of his Devotion, Love and Joy: that he has no more Zeal for the Honour of GOD: and that the Redeemer's Love does not excite in his Heart a more ſteady, uniform Complacency and Truſt: that he is ſtill in ſo much danger of offending him, and ſo often actually does ſo. Theſe Conſiderations throw open all the Sluces of his Sorrow, and make him to cry out, *Wo is me that I ſojourn in* MESECH, amidſt ſo many Diſturbers of my Peace, and at

ſuch

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such a Distance from the Object of all my Joy. But

3. Hope revives the Soul again, as it so often did that of the Psalmist; when he said *why art thou cast down, O my Soul? Hope thou in* GOD *for I shall yet praise him.* And for the support of his Hope the Christian recurs to the same Foundation which *David* did; *viz.* the Fidelity and Goodness of GOD, and the Comforts of his Word. And beside this, he has another and a new Foundation for his Hope which *David* never had; I mean the new and superior Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace by Jesus Christ, in whom all the Blessings of that Covenant are confirmed. This exalts his Hope sometimes even to a *Plerophory*, or a full Assurance of his Fitness for the heavenly Inheritance by the Grace of God, and of his Title to it through the Merits of Christ. So that he is sometimes ready to assume the Apostle *Paul*'s Triumph, saying, *who shall seperate me from the Love of Christ?*

And in proportion to his Hope in GOD through Christ is his fear of Sin, as the only thing that can obscure or weaken that *blessed Hope.*

In

In how happy and progreſſive a State now is that Chriſtian, who hath his Affections thus lively, thus ballanced, and thus ſanctified! whoſe ardent Love to God is ſeen by a ſteady Hatred of all Sin; his Joy in God preſerved ſtedfaſt and uniform by his Sorrow that he ſo often offends him; and whoſe lively Hope and Faith in Chriſt is kept from flying out into exorbitant Raptures by a fear of Sin and a Conſciouſneſs of remaining Weakneſs. Can you well imagine a Chriſtian to be in a more ſafe and comfortable Situation on this ſide Heaven? whilſt his Hope is ſtill riſing above his Fears, and his Joys above his Sorrows! SERM. III.

But now let us juſt turn our Eyes on the other Side; and ſee how different from this is the caſe of a Chriſtian in whoſe Affections there is a remarkable Defect, or Exceſs.

1. A Chriſtian whoſe Affections are too low and languid, though he may love and delight and hope in God ſincerely, yet his Love, Delight, and Hope are not ſo ſenſible, and do not give him that Life and Vigour which is obſervable in men of warm-

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er Zeal. He is too apt to want Spirit and Engagement of Heart in Religious Exerciſes; to ſink under Trials, and to be drawn into unjuſtifiable Compliances for want of Firmneſs and Reſolution to follow the Dictates of Conſcience invariably. So that he drags on too heavily and ſlowly in thoſe ways which he ſhould run with Alacrity and Joy. And on the other hand.

2. If the Paſſions be too warm and ſtrong, they often give the mind an Enthuſiaſtick or Superſtitious Turn. Such perſons are apt to place all Religion in Zeal and Fervour, and to depreciate cool and ſolid Reaſoning, which they ſeldom have any great Talent for. A man that hath more Zeal than others ought to have more Prudence than others to govern that Zeal, which will otherwiſe inevitably betray him into Weakneſs or Extravagance of Conduct. Not that any Man can love or rejoice in GOD too much; but he may be unapprized of the true Riſe and Tendency of thoſe Raptures, which he miſtakes for the pure Effects of divine Love and Joy; and in the Extaſy of his Zeal may attempt things ridiculous, or pretend to ſomething beyond what

what the human Soul in it's preſent ſtate of Weakneſs can well bear. This is what we call ENTHUSIASM. SERM. III.

So again, no one can hate or lament his Sins too much, or be too much afraid of offending GOD. But his Zeal againſt Sin may lead him to lay a Streſs upon little things; to condemn thoſe things as ſinful which are not ſo; and to cenſure very uncharitably thoſe that think otherwiſe. This is called SUPERSTITION. And both the one and the other is owing to an uncorrected Violence of the Paſſions when exerciſed about ſpiritual things.

So great an Influence has the due Moderation of the Paſſions on our right and regular Improvements in the Chriſtian Life.

But it is full time now to diſmiſs this part of the Subject, and proceed to the next which I propoſed, *viz.*

II. To conſider in what manner the Paſſions in general are to be brought under due Regulation, in order to preſerve a Peace of mind and Purity of heart.

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The Importance of this, eſpecially with regard to Religion, we have already ſeen; which ſhould excite our attention to the few following Rules, which I hope may be of uſe. And

1. The firſt thing neceſſary to this is, to be very converſant with our own Minds, and attentive to the ordinary and extraordinary frames of our Spirit. Let us learn to acquaint ourſelves more with our own Make: to ſee wherein our Paſſions are defective, and what Paſſion is moſt difficult to be excited when it ought to be exerciſed, and to give the Spur to *that*; and wherein they are exorbitant, or what Paſſion is apt to be too violent, and to put a Curb on *that*. If a Man knows not his reigning Paſſion, he knows nothing of himſelf; and till he knows it, it is impoſſible for him to guard againſt the Influence of it.

2. When one Paſſion becomes violent it may be tamed, at leaſt checked by another that is oppoſite to it. The Paſſions are uſually divided into Pairs, in each of which one Paſſion is ſet in oppoſition to another; as *Love* and *Hatred*, *Joy* and *Sorrow*, *Hope* and *Fear*, *Complacency* and *Anger*, *Eſteem* and *Contempt*, *Deſire* and *Averſion*,

*ſion.* The firſt in each Pair are called the pleaſing, and the laſt the painful Paſſions. Now when one of theſe grows exorbitant, its oppoſite will ſometimes ſeaſonably check it. For Inſtance; Is any one too much the Object of our *Anger* and *Averſion?* Let us attend to every thing that is excellent in him, or which requires any ſhare of our *Eſteem* and *Love*; for Characters are commonly mixt, and ſo ſhould be the Paſſions they excite. But if we can find in him nothing that is excellent, then to be ſure he is the proper Object of our *Pity*; which in this caſe will as effectually ſoften and ſuppreſs an exceſſive Reſentment, as a low degree of *Eſteem* will in the other caſe. SERM. III.

Again, is there any earthly Comfort or Bleſſing which we are apt to ſet our Hearts too much upon? Let us attend to its Inſufficiency, and view it in thoſe Circumſtances in which it can afford us no Satisfaction, and will appear more the Object of our Contempt than Eſteem.

Again, is any thing that is truly excellent the Object of our Averſion? Let us conſider whence that Averſion ariſes, whither it tends, and turn it in upon ourſelves

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for indulging it ſo unreaſonably; and remember always to repreſent the Object we ought to love in the moſt engaging Light.

3. To the due Diſcipline of the Paſſions it is neceſſary to obſerve and avoid thoſe Objects and Occaſions that are apt to excite their irregular Emotions. Paſſions, like Habits, gain ſtrength by Indulgence, and loſe it by want of Gratification and Exerciſe. For inſtance; if the World is apt to predominate in the Heart, we ſhould have as little to do with it as is conſiſtent with a prudent Management of our Concerns in it, and decline every thing that hath a tendency to attract and cement the Heart more cloſely to it. Whatever favours and ſtrengthens a Paſſion that hath already gained too great an Aſcendancy over us, we ſhould always conſider as not allowable in us. Becauſe to indulge to any known occaſion of Sin, is ſinful. And hence it is that the ſame thing is oftentimes lawful in one perſon that is not ſo in another.

4. Avoid the Society of thoſe who are under the Government of that Paſſion you would conquer. Their Company will be as dangerous to the Peace of your Mind, as the Preſence of one infected with a contagious

tagious Diſeaſe is to the Health of your Body. You breathe in tainted Air, and muſt ſoon expect to receive the Contagion. For the Paſſions catch and communicate themſelves like Wild-fire. And the more looſe and licentious they are, the ſooner are they propagated. Love begets Love, Sorrow excites Sorrow, and Wrath kindles Wrath. And with reſpect to the laſt of theſe *Solomon* gives us this particular Caution. *Make no Friendſhip with an angry man, and with a furious Man thou ſhalt not go, leſt thou learn his ways, and get a Snare to thy Soul (c).* To which I may add

5. In order to ſubdue or curb any particular Paſſion, it would be adviſeable to aſſociate much with thoſe in whom it is intirely conquered; whoſe Example will be a great Help and Encouragement to you in gaining the ſame Conqueſt.

The ſame Advice is equally proper with reference to the due regulation of all the Paſſions in general. Thoſe in whom they are too warm and violent ſhould often try the force of Example, by cultivating Friend-



(c) Prov. xxii. 24.

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ſhips with thoſe whoſe Tempers are more cool and even; and they whoſe Paſſions are too low ſhould converſe with Men of Zeal; by which means both may attain that happy Mediocrity or Moderation of the Paſſions which hath now been recommended.

6. Deſpiſe not this Doctrine. If Subjects more ſublime and affecting are more ſuitable to your taſte, they may not however be more uſeful or neceſſary than this. That which pleaſes us beſt does not always profit us moſt. If the forementioned Thoughts have had their due Weight, you muſt by this time be convinced that this is no unimportant Subject. From the expreſs Command of God it appears that Moderation is a point of indiſpenſable Duty and Wiſdom: and in no view does it appear more important than in this, as it teaches us the right Government of the Paſſions.

7. Pray to the Father of your Spirits to give you the right Government of them. What ever Difficulty there be in this Buſineſs, his Grace will ſoon make it eaſy. I

ſhall

ſhall conclude with one Advice more; and that is SERM. III.

*Laſtly*, Let the Love of GOD be the ruling Paſſion, and it will regulate and govern all the reſt. Love is a very active and commanding Paſſion: if it be ill placed and violent, it's Influence is often fatal. But if GOD be the Object, and the Exerciſe of it towards him be uniform, lively, and regular, it will have the moſt happy Effects and will guard the Heart againſt the inordinate Love of any thing elſe.

Here then the whole Buſineſs reſts. The right Government of all our Affections, all our Views, and all our Deſires, depends upon this; *viz.* that we make that Great and Bleſſed Being who is the Author of our Life and Happineſs, the only Object of our ſupreme Love; and make it our daily Endeavour to love him more. To this end let us more frequently draw nigh to, think of, and converſe with him; for the more we do ſo the more we ſhall love him. And in loving him there can be no Exceſs. All our Happineſs lies here at preſent; and all our Happineſs hereafter

hereafter will be this, to be for ever loving the bleſſed Author of it more and more. O, let us now cultivate this Divine and Heavenly Principle in our Hearts, with growing Zeal, Aſſiduity and Deſire, and it will have the moſt ſovereign Command over all our other Paſſions; with regard to which our *Moderation* will then not only appear to ourſelves, but ſoon will *be known unto all men.*

The laſt Inſtance in which I propoſed to recommend Moderation as eſpecially neceſſary, you may remember, refered to *Religious Principles.* That is, we ſhould endeavour to keep clear of Extremes in thoſe points of Doctrine in which we obſerve wiſe and good Men to be divided in their Sentiments. A matter of great Importance, becauſe *Truth generally lies in the Middle.* But as this would ſwell the preſent Subject too much, I thought it more proper to open and recommend this Branch of Moderation particularly from other Subjects as they occur; a Specimen of which you will have in the inſuing Diſcourſe.

SER-

# SERMON IV.

## The Nature and Neceſſity of working out our own SALVATION.

PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

*—Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good Pleaſure.*

IN theſe words we have

I. A Duty commanded.
II. A Motive to it ſubjoined.

I propoſe diſtinctly to conſider both, and then conclude with a ſuitable APPLICATION.

I. The

I. The Duty commanded is, *work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

Wherein we have

1. The matter of the Duty

2. The manner in which it is to be performed.

1. The Duty itſelf materially conſidered is, *work out your own Salvation.*

Which implies

1. That we diligently attend the means of Salvation, and make the beſt uſe of all thoſe Advantages we have to attain it. *Salvation* (which conſiſts in a total Deliverance from all Evil, and the everlaſting Enjoyment of all Good) ſhould ſurely be the chief concern of an immortal Soul! The very Word implies that we are liable to Miſery, and capable of being delivered from it. Should not our firſt enquiry then be, *what muſt I do to be ſaved?* Now the grand Deſign of the Goſpel was to ſet us right in this important Enquiry, and ſhew us the way to Salvation by *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Author and Purchaſer of it. But though it was purchaſed by him, it muſt be *wrought out* by us. GOD hath appointed certain

Means

Means proper to prepare us for it, and requires of us a diligent Uſe of thoſe means; He hath given us many valuable Advantages for obtaining it, and expects that we ſhould improve them. For inſtance, the nobler powers of our Mind, our Reaſon, Underſtanding, Memory, and Judgment; the pious Inſtructions we received in our Youth, the principles of Truth and Wiſdom we then imbibed; the invaluable Bleſſing of a Divine Revelation, and the Helps we have to underſtand it; the Ordinances of publick and private Worſhip; the various Admonitions and Calls of Providence; pious Friendſhips, and Opportunities of religious Converſe; and above all, the gracious Influences of GOD's Holy Spirit; Theſe are great Helps and unſpeakable Advantages for obtaining Salvation and Happineſs; and by a careful Improvement of all theſe we are to ſeek for and *work out* that Salvation.

2. The Command further implies that we diligently cultivate thoſe good Diſpoſitions and Habits which are abſolutely neceſſary to qualify us for it; eſpecially thoſe two great duties of Piety, *Repentance* and the *Love of God*. In this ſenſe the Precept is the

the ſame with thoſe which ſo frequently occur in the Old Teſtament; *Waſh ye, make ye clean* (*a*); *amend your ways and your doings* (*b*); *turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die* (*c*); *break off your Sins by Righteouſneſs*, (*d*); *make ye a new Heart, and a new Spirit* (*e*); with which agree the like Exhortations in the new Teſtament; *Give diligence to make your Calling and Election ſure* (*f*); *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtraight Gate* (*g*); *let us labour to enter into that Reſt* (*h*).

The plain caſe is this; the Soul of Man depraved by Sin, muſt be greatly changed before it can enjoy GOD; it muſt become holy before it can be happy; for it is Holineſs alone that qualifies it for Happineſs; to this therefore GOD frequently and earneſtly calls us in his Word: And though the Work at laſt be his own (as I ſhall hereafter ſhew) yet much may be done, and muſt be done on our part; and therefore he *hath* graciouſly afforded us theſe common Helps and Advantages before mentioned, which he requires us carefully to improve, in order to attain

(*a*) Iſai. i. 16. (*b*). Jerem. vii. 3. (*c*) Ezek. xxxiii. 11. (*d*) Dan iv. 27. (*e*) Ezek. xviii. 31. (*f*) 2 Pet. i. 10. (*g*) Luke xiii. 24. (*h*) Heb. iv. 11.

attain thoſe holy Diſpoſitions ſo neceſſary to our Happineſs. And this is what the Text calls *working out our Salvation.* SERM. IV.

*Laſtly,* Another thing implied in this Duty is, that we carefully watch againſt and avoid all thoſe Sins both of Omiſſion and Commiſſion, which, if they prevail, will undoubtedly diſqualify us for and exclude us from Salvation.

This then is the general Import of the Duty commanded in the Text. I am now to conſider

2. The manner in which it is to be performed, viz. *with fear and trembling.*

That is, with a humble cautious Fear leſt we ſhould fall ſhort of that Salvation we ſeek to ſecure. The Author to the Hebrews gives us the ſame Advice, *Heb.* iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear leſt a promiſe being left us of entering into his Reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it. Happy is the Man* (ſaith *Solomon) that feareth always* (*i*). And this cautious Fear is founded on a juſt ſenſe of our *Ignorance, Folly* and *Weakneſs.*

A ſenſe of our *Ignorance* ſhould make us fear leſt we miſs the right way to Salvation. There are ſo many wrong Paths in this Wil-

(*i*) Prov. xxviii. 14.

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Wilderneſs, and but one right, and that a narrow one; we find ſo much difficulty to diſcern the right way, and when diſcerned to enter upon it, and when entered upon to perſevere in it, that it is no wonder we often walk with trembling Feet and doubtful Heart. When we ſee ſo many confident in a wrong way, and ſo many draw back from the right, have we not Cauſe to fear?

Again, a conſciouſneſs of our *Folly* will make us fear leſt when we are entered on the right way to Salvation we ſhould afterwards deſert it. That we have in many former Inſtances acted very fooliſhly, we too well know; and we have the ſame bad and backſliding Heart ſtill. We have too much reaſon to ſay of our ſelves what GOD ſaid formerly of his People *Iſrael, a deceived Heart hath turned us aſide* (*k*). *Every way of Man is right in his own Eyes*; and therefore many *go down unto the Grave with a Lye in their right Hand* (*l*). Through the influence of Example, the force of Habit, the power of Cuſtom, and the prejudice of Senſe, there is not a more common thing in the World than Self-deception; (and that in affairs of great

(*k*) Iſai. xliv. 20. (*l*) Prov. xiv. 12.

great Importance, and ſcarce any thing more dangerous, or attended with more fatal Effects. Very juſtly then hath *Solomon* made this cautious Fear a mark of Wiſdom, *Prov.* xiv. 16. *a wiſe Man feareth, and departeth from Evil.* And in fine, a ſenſe of our *Weakneſs* will make us fear leſt we be overcome by the Enemies of our Salvation. The Luſts of the Heart, the Subtilties of Satan, and Solicitations of Senſe, create us many Conflicts; and to divert us from, or diſcourage us in our beſt Purſuits, they often excite an Oppoſition to which we are very unequal. So that we are never more ſafe or ſuccesful in our Spiritual Warfare, than when moſt diffident of our own Strength and Wiſdom we are moſt dependent on divine Grace and Direction; when conſcious of our Weakneſs we chuſe rather to decline the attack than meet it, and when the Remembrance of our paſt Defeats makes us cautious, humble and vigilant. SERM. IV.

So much for the Duty commanded, *work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling.* I proceed now

2. To conſider the Motive ſubjoined; *for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good Pleaſure.*

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And here

1. I ſhall briefly open to you the meaning of the Words ſeparately conſidered.

2. Conſider them in their Connection with the preceding; and ſhew you how properly they are urged as a motive to the Duty before commanded.

1. I ſhall open to you the meaning of the Words as ſeparately conſidered.

By theſe Words then ſome mean no more than a divine *Concourſe*; or GOD's co-operating Grace which concurs with our ſincere Endeavours after Holineſs. But the Original Word plainly implies ſomething farther *; for it properly ſignifies not only to work with us but to work in us. And this is *of his good Pleaſure* †; or through his mere good Will towards us, there being nothing on our part to move him thereunto. And this *Energy* is exerted not only on our Endeavours but on our Hearts; for He works in us not only to *do* but to *will*. I ſhall endeavour to explain to you both theſe Expreſſions briefly.

1. How are we to conceive of GOD's working in us *to do*? I anſwer

It

* ὁ ἐνεργῶν not ὁ συνεργῶν. † ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας.

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It is the Grace of God that fixes and confirms the good Purpoſes of the Heart, which would otherwiſe be faint and fluctuating.

It alſo ſtrengthens the natural and moral Powers of the mind, to put thoſe good Purpoſes into Execution.

The Providence of GOD often diminiſhes the Difficulties that lie in the way of our Duty, by which we are ſometimes diſcouraged from attempting it. Nay

It ſometimes intirely removes thoſe Difficulties, which makes the Work advance with unexpected Eaſe and Expedition. And all this is called the Divine *Concurrence*, or GOD's working in us *to do*. But

2. GOD is ſaid to work in us not only *to do*, but *to will*. Now how are we to conceive of this Divine Energy on the Mind, in a manner that is at once honourable to the Grace of God, and ſuitable to the Freedom of a rational nature? For when ever we go about to explain the manner of Divine Operations on the Heart, we muſt ever keep theſe two points in view in order to guard us againſt two very common extremes in this affair. Now, previous to the Diſcuſſion of

this point let theſe two things be carefully attended to.

1. What ever Influence the Grace of GOD has upon the mind of Man; it is not the effect of a phyſical but a moral Operation, or in other and plainer words, GOD does not work upon our Hearts in a forceable and mechanical, but in a rational and perſuaſive way. He always deals with his Creatures in a manner ſuitable to the nature he gives them; with inanimate Creatures by Impulſe, with animal Creatures by Inſtinct, and with intelligent Creatures by Reaſon. And to move rational and intelligent Beings by Force and Violence, would be a method no leſs abſurd and incongruous than to attempt to influence inanimate and irrational Beings by Perſuaſion and Argument. So that it is very unworthy the Wiſdom of GOD to ſuppoſe that his Operations on reaſonable minds are co-ercive or compulſory.

2. Theſe Operations, whatever they are, muſt be ſuppoſed to be reſiſtable; as all ſpiritual or moral Operations in their own nature are. If they be abſolutely irreſiſtable, they muſt be mere mechanical Compulſion; from

from which, I have juſt ſhewn, they are eſ- SERM. IV.
ſentially different. Beſides, this Suppoſition intirely deſtroys the Liberty of the human mind, and is attended with fatal Conſequences. For if we only act as we are acted upon, and when we are acted upon have no power to reſiſt the Impulſe, what do we differ from mere Machines? This ſaps the Foundation of all moral Goodneſs, and of all future Rewards and Puniſhments. And how could the Apoſtle upon this ſuppoſition exhort us *to work out our Salvation?* The very Motive by which he enforces this Precept would be a Contradiction to it. And what occaſion were there for *fear and trembling*, if we had not a power ſo much as of reſiſting the Operation of that Grace that works upon us? And it is worth obſerving that the ſame word with that in our Text is uſed *Eph.* ii. 2. where Satan is ſaid *to work in the Children of Diſobedience* *; and no one, I believe, will ſay that his Temptations are irreſiſtable.

But how then does GOD work in us *to will?*— I anſwer in one Word; He *effectually perſuades*



* τὸ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας.

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*perſuades* the Will. And this He may be ſuppoſed to do

By inlightening the Underſtanding; and ſetting the things of Religion before the mind in their proper point of view, by removing thoſe clouds and miſts of Error and Prejudice which overſpread the mind, and prevented it from ſeeing thoſe things in the ſame Light before: and in conſequence of this

By engaging the attention to their great Neceſſity and Importance: which may further be effected by bringing the mind into a ſerious and thoughtful frame, and by weakening thoſe carnal Affections, and withdrawing the Objects of them, which are ſo apt to give it a contrary Diſpoſition. And the conſequence hereof, by the continuance of the ſame gracious Aſſiſtance, will be

Sincere purpoſes of Repentance, and earneſt Deſires after Holineſs. The Soul having thus a different view of things and forming a different judgment concerning them, is affected towards them in quite another manner from what it was before. The Eyes of *it's Underſtanding being opened* it not only diſcerns, but prefers the *things that are excellent*. It wiſhes and wants to be more

more holy, more like to God, more like what it ſhould be, and more like what it will be in Heaven. SERM. IV.

In conſequence of all this it enters upon different Purſuits: puts thoſe good purpoſes into Execution; whilſt, by the concurrence of divine Grace and Providence, it's internal Difficulties and external Diſcouragements are gradually removed, at once to make its courſe clear and its progreſs eaſy.

And thus may the Grace of God be conceived to work upon the Will; not only by moral but divine Influence, by giving an Efficacy to what is commonly called *moral Suaſion*; and that in a way connatural to the rational powers of the Soul, ſuitable to its native Freedom, and without offering the leaſt violence to its Liberty as a moral Agent. And thus to conceive of it, ſets the mind at eaſe, reconciles the different Repreſentations of this matter in Scripture, honours the Grace of God, preſerves the Liberty of the human mind, and I think keeps clear of all Extremes. And now

2. I need not take up much of your time in ſhewing how proper and powerful a Motive this is to enforce the Duty here commanded,

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commanded. For is God always ready by his Grace, not only to aſſiſt us in Duty but, to diſpoſe the mind to it, to excite good Inclinations, ſerious Thoughts and holy Deſires in the Heart, and to ſtrengthen us to carry them into Practice? Is his Spirit at work upon our Minds, to remove our Darkneſs, correct our Prejudices, ſubdue our Luſts, and perſuade our Wills, by ſhewing us the things of God in a light of Evidence and Importance; and is he willing to continue that Grace (if we do not obſtinately, refuſe it) 'till the Will is finally gained, and our Salvation ſecured by our being made fit to enjoy it? What mighty Encouragement then have we here to *work out our own Salvation!* to be diligent, conſtant and indefatigable in the Improvement of all thoſe means and helps which we enjoy for the attaining it!

But after all, may this Grace of GOD be rejected, theſe divine Operations reſiſted, may the *Holy Ghoſt be quenched* and grieved, and provoked by our obſtinacy to withdraw from us; and the moſt hopeful Beginnings prove abortive by our after Slothfulneſs, Security and Sin? What need have we then

to

to work out our Salvation *with fear and trembling!* And how properly and ſtrongly does the Motive thus explained enforce the Duty before recommended! SERM. IV.

## APPLICATION.

By way of Application of this Subject I propoſe

1. To lay before you the Extremes into which ſome are apt to run with regard to this Doctrine.

2. The Source and Origin of thoſe Extremes.

3. To point out to you what I take to be the Truth, as equally diſtant from thoſe Extremes, And

*Laſtly*, Conclude with a few practical Reflections upon the whole.

1. I am to lay before you the Extremes into which ſome are apt to run with regard to this Doctrine; and from which one would be ready to think, this ſingle Text ſhould have been a ſufficient Guard.

1. Some are apt enormouſly to magnify the Ability and Freedom of the human mind;

mind; and to imagine that it has an innate Power of its own to make thoſe Improvements in Piety and Virtue which are neceſſary to fit it for future Happineſs, without the ſupernatural and ſpecial Aſſiſtances of Divine Grace; or that every Man has a power of his own (originally given him by his Maker) to change his own Heart, and to rectify all his mental Diſorders ſo as properly and ſtrictly ſpeaking to *work out his own Salvation.*

This Sentiment came originally from the *Stoics* (*o*). and was thence adopted by ſome antient Chriſtians, who in the fourth Century were diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Pelagians.* But that it is a very wrong notion appears from hence, that it is very diſhonourable to divine Grace, ſupercedes the neceſſity of all ſpecial divine Concourſe, ſuppoſes the human mind to have the ſame Power and Self-command ſince the Fall as it had before, apparently contradicts not only

(*o*) Thus ſaith *Seneca*, Quid opus eſt Votis? ſac teipſum bonum. And in another place, *That* I AM, *I owe to* GOD, *that I am wiſe, I owe to my ſelf.* And to the ſame purpoſe *Cicero*, omnem denique commoditatem proſperitatemque vitæ a Dijs ſe habere; virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit. *Denat. Deor.* l. 3. § 36.

ly ſome of the plaineſt declarations of Scripture but the general Deſign and Scheme of the Goſpel Revelation, and leads directly to Preſumption, Pride and Popery; for the Papiſts in their Improvements on this Error in their Doctrines of Merit and Supererogation have carried it to as great a height of abſurdity as it can be ſuppoſed capable of being advanced. But now to avoid this Extreme ſome have run into the direct contrary; and have imagined SERM. IV.

2. That mankind by the Fall have loſt all the native Power and Freedom of their minds in ſpiritual things; that their reaſoning faculties with regard to Religion are totally perverted; that a Sinner is entirely paſſive in the work of Converſion, can only act as he is acted upon, that the Spirit of GOD muſt do all for him and in him; and in a word that one who is *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins* has no more power to do any thing towards recovering a ſpiritual Life, than a dead Body has towards recovering itſelf to a natural Life.

This notion came originally from an antient Sect of Chriſtians which prevailed in the fourth Century, known by the name

of

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of *Manichees*, from whom it was adopted by Saint *Auſtin*, who in the warmth of his zeal againſt the *Pelagian* Errors (for nothing is more common than in flying from one Extreme to run upon another) carried it to a length not to be juſtified by Scripture or Reaſon; and from him (whoſe Piety and Eminence gave it a Sanction it never had before) it hath been tranſmitted down in the Church and is retained by many Chriſtians ſtill.

But now that this is for certain as great a Miſtake as the other plainly appears from hence. That it cuts the Sinews of all human Endeavours; ſaps the very foundation of practical religion; contradicts all the Remonſtrances, Expoſtulations and Precepts directed in the word of GOD to Sinners; under a Shew of exalting divine Grace highly diſhonours the divine Wiſdom; makes men mere machines; and opens a wide door to licentiouſneſs of Life.

And as thoſe who imagine they have a power to perform good Works of themſelves do enormouſly magnify the value of them, ſo *theſe* who conceive they have no power at all to perform them, do as much depretiate and deſpiſe them; will not allow

low them neceſſary as Conditions of Salvation, but only deſireable as Evidences of Juſtification; and look upon them, when performed before Converſion, but as *ſplendid Sins.* SERM. IV.

Theſe now are the Extremes on both ſides. The one does not conſider man as a fallen Creature, nor the other as a rational Creature; the one fruſtrates the efficacy of Divine Operations, the other deſtroys the freedom of Human Agency; the one diſhonours the Grace of GOD, the other his Wiſdom, the one leads to Preſumption, the other to Sloth; in a Word, they who maintain the one read the former part of my Text ſeparately from the latter, and they who plead for the other keep to the latter part of it independently of the former: but both Extremes are equally contrary to Scripture, injurious to practical Piety, and at the ſame diſtance from the Truth which ſeems to lie between them. But before I proceed to ſhew you what that is, it may not be amiſs;

2. To examine briefly into the Source and Origin of theſe Extremes; or what is the cauſe that men who enjoy the ſame Lights and Advantages, are under the ſame Guidance

dance of Reaſon and Revelation for attaining the Truth, ſhould nevertheleſs be ſo frequently betrayed into thoſe Extremes which are equally diſtant from it.

This now can be reſolved into no other than the uſual and common cauſes of Error in all matters of Religion, *viz.*

A narrow contracted mind, which does not take a ſufficient Scope and Compaſs in its Contemplations, but confines them to a few particulars which it views only in one light.

An idle and indolent Turn of mind, which contents itſelf with a general and ſuperficial view of things, without examining into their Connection, Tendency or Effects.

A partial Study of Scripture; that is, not attending to the proper Connection of one part with another, nor adjuſting our regards to Doctrines by the Importance with which we ſee them there recommended; but confounding the literal and figurative Conſtruction of the ſacred Phraſe, by being more intent to find out that ſenſe which a particular party hath eſtabliſhed, than that which the inſpired Writer intended.

The

The Bias of Education and force of Cuſtom; which warps and blinds the beſt and cleareſt Underſtandings to a degree which we ſhould never think credible, if we did not ſee it Fact. And SERM. IV.

*Laſtly*, A Determination to read, hear and converſe only on one ſide; and whilſt a man continues ſo to do, he does not know but that the Truth, or at leaſt a great part of the Truth, may lie on the other.

Theſe are the uſual Sources of Religious Miſtakes, and the obvious cauſes why Chriſtians who have all the ſame Rule to go by are nevertheleſs ſo often betrayed into oppoſite Extremes.

3. I am now to lay before you what ſeems to be the Truth in this caſe, as equally oppoſite to the two extremes before-mentioned. This you may pleaſe to take in the five following ſhort Propoſitions.

*Propoſition* 1. That ſince the Fall, Human reaſon is much obſcured but not defaced, and our mental Powers are much weakened but not deſtroyed.

If the truth of this Propoſition be allowed (and I believe it will not be readily diſputed) it goes to the Foundation of thoſe Errors which lie in both the forementioned

Extremes

Extremes; one of which conſiders the Powers of the human mind in its preſent ſtate as perfect, the other as totally perverted.

*Propoſition* 2. That in compaſſion to our preſent Darkneſs and Inability GOD hath graciouſly offered us divine Illumination and Strength.

This is plain from Scripture, wherein theſe Promiſes of ſpiritual Light and Aſſiſtance are frequently made to us; and from the many Prayers which *David*, *Paul*, and other Saints mentioned in Scripture, have put up to GOD, that he would pleaſe to guide and enlighten, ſtrengthen and direct them. This the Text calls a *Divine Energy*, or GOD's *working in us to will and to do*. And in what manner we may conceive of it conſiſtently with the Liberty of man as a free and moral Agent, I have endeavoured already to ſhew you.

*Propoſition* 3. That this Divine Light and Grace is freely communicated to thoſe who ſincerely ſeek and endeavour after it.

The truth of this Propoſition is confirmed by a great variety of plain Scriptures; ſuch as, *ſeek and ye ſhall find*; GOD *giveth Wiſdom to them that aſk it*; and his Holy Spirit

*to*

*to them that ſeek it of him*, and that more freely than *earthly Parents give good Gifts unto their Children.*

*Propoſition* 4. That theſe Divine Communications may be forfeited and withdrawn from man, by reaſon of their abuſe of and neglect to improve them.

This is equally plain from many Scripture Declarations and Examples; as that GOD's *Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man*; and when he is pleaſed to take away his Holy Spirit from them (a Judgment which *David* ſo importunately deprecated *(p)*,) he is then ſaid to *give them up to a reprobate mind*; and *to harden their Hearts*; that is, by withdrawing from them that Grace they had ſo often rejected and abuſed. But

*Laſtly*, If we continue watchful and diligent, ſuppliant and dependent, that Light and Grace will be continued and continually increaſed till our Salvation is compleat.

Theſe Conſiderations now ſet the Precept of the Text in a light of great Importance; and ſhould equally induce us to *work out our own Salvation*, and to depend upon the Grace of God, who through his good-will to-



*(p)* Pſal. li. 11,

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towards us *(q)* is always ready to *work in us both to will and to do.*

And that this is a juſt and right way of thinking in this matter, and the Sentiment to which we ſhould always adhere as the Truth, appears very probable from hence— That it is equally diſtant from the two forementioned Extremes, has all that is valuable in both, preſerves the Freedom of the human mind as much as the one, and magnifies the Grace of GOD as much as the other; reconciles thoſe Scriptures which ſeem to be contradictory; is moſt honourable to all the Divine Perfections; moſt ſuited to the general Deſign and Scheme of the Chriſtian Revelation; aſcribes the Salvation of men to Divine Grace, and their Condemnation to themſelves; is beſt adapted to the ſtate of Man as a depraved, and to his nature as a rational Being; is embaraſſed with the feweſt Difficulties; and in a word, ſets both parts of my Text not only in the ſtrongeſt Light of Importance, but in the faireſt point of View.

*Laſtly,*

(q) So the word (εὐδοκία) may be rendered, which we tranſlate *of his own good pleaſure,*

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*Laſtly*, I ſhall now conclude with a few practical Reflections upon the whole.

And 1. Let us be very thankful if the Providence of God hath ſo ordered the Circumſtances of our Education, that we are not under the ſame Temptations that many others are, to run into either of thoſe dangerous Extremes I before mentioned. *Dangerous* I call them, not only for their Tendency, but the bad Influence they often have on the Heart and Life. Not but that many good men are to be found on both ſides, who governed by a ſpirit of genuine Piety live in a very happy Inconſiſtency with their own Principles; thoſe on the one ſide, who too much magnify the powers of the human mind, praying as earneſtly for Divine Light and Help as if they felt their need of it; and thoſe on the other ſide who too much depretiate thoſe powers, uſing and employing them with as much care and diligence as if they knew their Salvation depended thereupon. However, though the Grace of God may ſometimes lead a man to live down his own bad Principles, it is nevertheleſs a great mercy not to lie under the Influence of them.

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2. What hath been ſaid ſhould not only teach us Moderation in our ſentiments of Doctrine, but charity in our opinion of Perſons. Do others differ from us in their ſentiments of the Subject which hath now been handled? Let us remember that by a different tincture in their Education they ſee through a different Medium and with different Eyes: and conſequently it is not poſſible that both of us ſhould form the ſame Judgment of Objects ſo differently diſcerned: had we been taught as they were it is probable we ſhould think as they do; and with the ſame Opportunities and Method of Inſtruction which we have enjoyed it is likely they would have have had the ſame Sentiments with us. We ſcarce know how to make allowance enough for the Bias of Education with regard to the principles which perſons imbibe. However let us take care that we do not induce others to run into one Extreme in their way of thinking, by going into another in our own; than which nothing is more common in the courſe of a warm Debate: nor ſhould we be ready to charge upon others all the bad Conſequences of their notions, which they are not

not ſenſible of and perhaps heartily diſa- vow. SERM. IV.

*Laſtly,* What remains but that we firmly reſolve by the Grace of God to practice this important Scripture-precept which hath now been ſo particularly recommended; and be ſure to take both parts of it together. Let us work in a way of Dependence and depend in a way of Duty; take as much care of our Souls as if we had no Divine Help to truſt to, and truſt the Divine Grace as much as if we could abſolutely do nothing for our ſelves. We muſt work and labour and watch and ſtrive, but after all remember that *by Grace we are ſaved*; and ſay, *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the Glory:* This becomes us as reaſonable Creatures; this becomes us as fallen Creatures. Let not our Weakneſs diſcourage our endeavours, but excite our Prayers; and let not our Prayers excuſe but animate and invigorate our Endeavours: for though we are weak in our ſelves, *we are ſtrong in the Grace which is in Chriſt Jeſus.*

# SERMON V.

## The Knowledge of GOD the first Principle of RELIGION.

1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

*And thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father, and ſerve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind: for the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts and underſtandeth all the imaginations of the Thoughts: if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

THESE Words contain the advice which King *David* gave to his Son *Solomon*, when the former was advanced in years and about to lay down the Burden of Life and

and Government: the laſt of which he bore for forty years, and then died *in a good old age, full of Days, Riches, and Honour (a)*.

Much had he done for GOD, and for the intereſt of his Church and People during the active part of his Life. And, which is very extraordinary, amidſt all the cares that encompaſs a Crown and all the gaiety and grandeur of a Court, he maintained to the laſt ſo warm a ſpirit of piety and ſo devout an intercourſe between GOD and his own Soul, as is rarely to be found under all the advantages of a recluſe, and private Life: of which the Book of *Pſalms*, which contains the Meditations of his heart in the hours of his Retirement, is a manifeſt proof.

To the very laſt was his Heart ſet upon the Honour of GOD; and he had formed a deſign to cloſe his life with one ſignal act of Piety, and that was *building a Houſe to the* LORD; which the Leiſure, Wealth and Tranquility he now enjoyed gave him a fit opportunity of doing. But he was not permitted to put this Deſign in execution. This was an Honour reſerved for his Son.



(a) Chap. xxix. 27, 28.

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*But* (ſaith GOD to him) *foraſmuch as it was in thine Heart to build an Houſe for my Name, thou didſt well in that it was in thine Heart: notwithſtanding, thou ſhalt not build the Houſe, but thy Son which ſhall come forth out of thy Loins, he ſhall build the Houſe for my Name* (*b*).

However he prepared Materials for that Work in great abundance, and then having aſſembled the Princes and Captains of *Iſrael*, He *ſtood upon his Feet* and with great affection and Condeſcention addreſſed himſelf to them upon the important affairs of Religion and Government. Then turning to the Prince his Succeſſor, in their preſence and hearing gives him the following Charge. *And thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father, and ſerve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind: for the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the imaginations of the Thoughts: if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

This advice ſuitable as it is to the Majeſty of a King, is however ſo judicious and parental as to carry it's extenſive Influence into every

(*b*) 2 Chron. vi. 8, 9.

every place and family; and is, if I mistake not, peculiarly seasonable in the present Age. It consists of two parts; SERM. V.

I. The Advice which *David* gives to his Son *Solomon: and thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.*

II. The reason of that Advice, or the Motives upon which it is urged: *for the* LORD *searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the Thoughts; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

I. We have here the Advice which *David* gives to his Son *Solomon: and thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind.*

And this Advice contains three particulars, each of which deserves a distinct consideration, *viz.*

1. An Exhortation to know GOD.

2. To serve Him.

3. A

3. A Declaration in what manner he is to be ſerved: viz. *with a perfect Heart and a willing mind.*

1. The firſt part of the Advice is an exhortation to know GOD, *and thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father.*

And as the *Knowledge of* GOD is the firſt principle and foundation of all true Religion, and neceſſary to direct us how we may acceptably ſerve him, I hope I ſhall be indulged a more particular diſcuſſion of this important Subject. I propoſe therefore

1, To conſider what the *Knowledge of* GOD implies, conſidered in itſelf.

2. What is it's proper Efficacy and Influence.

1. I am to ſhew you what the Knowledge of GOD implies, when conſidered in itſelf. Which may be compriſed under theſe three particulars, *viz.*

A firm Belief of his Being.

Juſt and regular Sentiments concerning the Perfections of his nature. And

A frequent and ſerious Contemplation of thoſe Perfections.

1. The firſt thing implied in the Knowledge

ledge of GOD, conſidered in itſelf, is a firm Belief of his Exiſtence. *He that cometh to* GOD *muſt believe that he is* (c); or that there is ſuch a Being as GOD in the Univerſe, who is the original Cauſe of all other Being, and therefore uncreated and Self-exiſtent; that is, neceſſarily exiſtent and without Beginning. We our ſelves are Beings, whoſe Exiſtence will never end; which is an awful and ſurpriſing thought! But that there ſhould be a Being which never had a Beginning, is much more incomprehenſible. And yet it muſt be ſo. Otherwiſe no thing could have a Being; unleſs it be ſaid that any thing could make itſelf; which is altogether impoſſible, for then a thing muſt *act* before it *is*, or be and not be at the ſame time. There muſt, of conſequence then, have been ſome firſt Cauſe of all other Being; and He, as he could not make himſelf, muſt be Eternal; that is, without beginning to be.

Now the Exiſtence of GOD cannot properly be ſaid to be learned from a Divine Revelation; for that ſuppoſes it, and ſuppoſes

(c) Heb. xi. 6.

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poſes our Knowledge of it. For we muſt firſt believe there is a GOD before we can believe any Revelation to come from him, directing us how we are to ſerve and worſhip him. And therefore though a Revelation may ſerve, among other excellent purpoſes, to confirm us in that Belief, yet GOD was pleaſed to make a plain diſcovery of his Exiſtence and Perfections to the World, before ever it was favoured with ſuch a Revelation. And for this we have the expreſs Teſtimony of the Apoſtle *Paul*, who tells us, *that the Inviſible things of* GOD *from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead (d).* Would

(d) Rom. i, 20. — The Heathens were ſo far from doubting the Exiſtence of one GOD that they generally ran into the oppoſite Error, and believed there were many. But tho' this was the popular and eſtabliſhed Opinion, yet ſeveral of the moſt wiſe and thinking men among them broke through this national Prejudice in favour of Polytheiſm; and by attending to the ſame Light which diſcovered to them the Exiſtence of the Deity, they were ſoon convinced of his Unity; or that there muſt be one ſupreme firſt Cauſe; whom they often ſpeak of in the ſingular number, and commonly diſtinguiſh by the Attribute of Omniſcience.

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Would we know GOD; then we must endeavour to impress this first principle of all Religion upon our Hearts, *viz.* that there is a GOD; one Supreme, Independent, Eternal first Cause. Every thing we see around us should bring that Thought to our mind: with which there is another naturally connected, *viz.* that we are his Creatures: and by pursuing these two Thoughts and seriously attending to the consequences of them, our own minds will lead us in a good measure to that right and reverent Behaviour which we ought at all times to observe towards him.

2. The next thing contained in the true Knowledge of GOD is forming just and regular Sentiments of the Perfections of his nature. And in order hereunto it is necessary

Πάντα ἰδὼν Διὸς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ πάντα νοήσας. *Hes.*
The Eye of GOD sees and considers all things.
Ἐισορόα βροτῶν, αὐτὸς δέ γε πάντας ὁρᾶται. *Orpheus.*
He inspects the ways of men, for he sees them all.
ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς βλέπει σὲ, πλησίον παρών. *Menander.*
For that GOD who is always present sees thee.
Quis enim non timet Deum omnia pervidentem? *Cicero.*
Who does not fear that GOD who perfectly sees all things?
Vid. *Just. Mart.* de Monar. Dei, p. 105. *Theoph. Antioch.* ad *Autolychum*, p. 86. *Clem. Alex.* Strom. l. 5. p. 708, 709, 720, 721.

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ſary that we diveſt our ſelves of all unworthy and injurious conceptions of him, and diligently attend to the diſcoveries he hath been pleaſed to make of himſelf in his Word, his Works and his Ways of Providence.

We can never attain the true Knowledge of God unleſs we lay aſide thoſe apprehenſions of him which are plainly diſhonourable to his name and nature. And it is but too common a thing with ſome Chriſtians, notwithſtanding they acknowledge all the Attributes of GOD as diſcovered in the manner I have juſt mentioned, yet to talk of him in ſuch a way and repreſent him in ſuch a Light as is incompatible with thoſe Perfections which they believe to be eſſential to his nature. To prevent which let us always remember, that whatever argues a real Imperfection or Frailty in man, ought not in the moſt diſtant Reſemblance to be aſcribed to the ever bleſſed GOD. For inſtance, we muſt not dare to think that our Heavenly Father has any thing of that blind, unreaſonable Partiality with regard to his Children which ſome earthly Parents ſhew with reſpect to theirs; who uſe an unjuſt

ſeverity

ſeverity towards ſome, whilſt they can ſee no faults at all in others. Whoever even in his Thoughts, attributes any thing like this to God, not only greatly diſhonours but directly contradicts him, who hath ſo often and ſo expreſsly declared in his word, that *with him there is no reſpect of perſons*. Again, Cruelty, Rigour and Injuſtice are moſt criminal and deteſtable qualities in man: we cannot therefore without trembling hear others attribute to the beſt of Beings any thing which hath the leaſt appearance of that which is ſo abſolutely contrary to his nature: eſpecially when he hath taken ſo much care to diſtinguiſh himſelf in his word by thoſe amiable attributes of Benignity, Love and Mercy; which he hath magnified above all the reſt. Again, a fondneſs for Shew or external Pomp and Grandeur is another weakneſs in Man, which we ſhould take care not to attribute to God, by imagining that he is more acceptably worſhipped in ſtately Temples and magnificent Edifices than in any other place, or with coſtly Rites and pompous Forms than in any other manner. As if the maker of Heaven and Earth took delight in a beautiful Fabrick, and was beſt pleaſed

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pleaſed with the Worſhip performed there; when he declares that he is acceptably worſhipped only *in Spirit and Truth*, and that his proper Temple is the *humble Heart*. Again, we muſt not dare to imagine that the great GOD is ſo eaſy and unobſervant a Being as not to regard the Affronts and Diſhonours that are offered him by his Creatures, or that he will always bear with their Profaneneſs and Provocations. His Patience and Forbearance indeed are amazingly great, and far beyond any thing that we can ſee in man, but it is always exerciſed in a way conſiſtent with the honour of his Wiſdom and the rectitude of his Government; and therefore Sinners may depend upon an after-reckoning, and a puniſhment adequate to their unrepented Offences.

All ſuch Conceptions of GOD are highly unworthy of him; which unleſs we take care to avoid we ſhall greatly (though perhaps inadvertently) diſhonour him, by aſcribing to Him thoſe things which diſcover a manifeſt Weakneſs in Man.

But this is not all: we muſt not only take care to lay aſide all wrong and injurious Thoughts of GOD, but we muſt ever entertain

tain the most worthy and honourable Apprehensions of him; by attending to the Discoveries he hath been pleased to make of himself in his Word, in his Works and in his ways of Providence. SERM. V.

Of all the methods by which GOD hath been pleased to make known his Perfections to Mankind the most easy, comprehensive and clear is that of a Divine Revelation; in particular the Revelation of the Gospel, where all his Attributes are displayed in the fairest point of view; and especially as they are reflected upon us in the most amiable Light from Jesus Christ his Son, who was the *Brightness of the Father's Glory and the express Image of his Person.* But in seeking the true Knowledge of GOD from his own Word we should diligently compare the several Representations he there makes of himself together, and view the complex Glory of all his Perfections united; whereby we shall not only discern their entire Harmony and Consistency, and see an aditional Lustre reflected upon them from each other, but shall be safe from the danger of magnifying one Attribute at the expence of another; which we are sometimes too apt to do in

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contemplating each of them ſingly or in their own abſtracted Light.

But thoſe glorious Perfections of his Nature which GOD hath been pleaſed to declare to us in his *Word*, he hath diſplayed to us in his *Works*; wherein they are, as it were, rendered viſible to us, or (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) *are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by thoſe Things which are made*, for the Volume of Nature (which was the only Book the Heathens had to read the Name of GOD) exhibits to *us* the Glories of his Attributes in much more diſtinct and legible Characters than it did to *them*, by the light we now ſee reflected upon it from that of Scripture.

Again, the Conduct of *Providence* is another open Volume in which we may read the Attributes of GOD, and which contains a clear and lively Comment on the other two: for thoſe Perfections which his Word reveals and his Works diſplay, his Providence frequently exemplifies: and that not only in it's judicial Diſpenſations (for *God* is often *known by the Judgments which he executeth (e)*) but in the Mercies and Bleſſings it diſ-

(e) Pſ. ix. 16.

diſpenſes, both of a publick and private Nature; to the Nature, Importance and Seaſonableneſs of which if we did but piouſly and particularly attend, together with the Manner wherein and the Inſtruments whereby they are conveyed, we ſhould ſoon diſcover very plain and affecting Marks of a Divine Hand, to excite, aſſiſt and direct our Devotion. But to proceed SERM. V.

3. The Knowledge of GOD conſiſts not only in forming right and honourable Conceptions of him, but in a frequent and reverent Contemplation of him, according to the Diſcoveries he hath been pleaſed to make of his Perfections in his Word and Works and ways of Providence, For though the Sentiments we have been taught to form of GOD be moſt juſt and regular, yet if we ſeldom think of him we can in no propriety of Speech be ſaid to know him. Particularly

1. Let us frequently contemplate his Almighty Power. With GOD nothing is impoſſible but what is impoſſible in itſelf. He can do all things that are the proper Objects of Power; all things but what would ſhew him weak. *I know* (ſaith *Job*) *thou canſt*

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*do every thing (f).* The moſt amazing Exertion of Power that we know of was the Production of the World out of nothing; bringing Matter into Being, when it was not. And what can be too hard for Him who ſpake all things into Exiſtence, and is able to ſpeak all things again into nothing! And perhaps the next greateſt Act of Omnipotence was his uniting Soul and Body, or tying Matter and Mind together in the Compoſition of the human Frame. So that every man is a living Miracle to himſelf, and a ſtanding Monument of the Almighty Power of his Maker.

2. We muſt often think of GOD as the moſt Holy Being. Infinitely removed from all poſſibility of moral Defect: whoſe Rectitude of nature is as incomprehenſible as the Immenſity of his Power. Which two Ideas of GOD inſpire the bleſſed Angels with the profoundeſt Reverence, when proſtrate at his Throne they cry out, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty (g).* and *Seraphims* are repreſented as vailing their Faces with their Wings, as bluſhing to ſtand in his holy Preſence *(h) There is none holy as the* LORD, *neither*

*(f)* Job xlii. 2. *(g)* Rev. iv. 8. *(h)* Iſai. vi. 2, 3.

*ther is there any Rock that can be likened unto our* GOD *(i)*. Where his Holiness and Power are again both mentioned together, to give us the utmost Security that his Omnipotence can never be exerted in any way unbecoming the moral Rectitude of his nature. SERM. V.

3. He is the most wise GOD. Wisdom refers both to the Understanding and Conduct; and consists in discerning and pursuing the best Ends by the best Means. And hence it is that *the Wisdom of this World is* so often *Foolishness with* GOD, or appears in his Eyes as Folly. Because the men of the World are commonly so miserably mistaken in their End, whatever means they use in the Prosecution of it. So that could they attain their End, they could not be happy. Which is certainly great Folly. The greatest End which GOD can propose to himself is his own Glory in the advancement of universal Righteousness in the World. And the Expediency of the several methods of his Providential Conduct to promote this great End (though at present it appears to us inexplicable, yet) will hereafter, when the Mysteries of Pro-



(*i*) 1 Sam. ii. 2.

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vidence are unfolded, appear Gloriously conſpicuous. And as this is the great End which the Wiſdom of GOD propoſes, ours ſhould aim at nothing leſs.

4. We muſt ever conſider the great God as a Being of indefectible Veracity: who will moſt certainly fulfill all his Word; all the promiſes he hath made to his Servants and all the Threatenings he hath denounced againſt his Enemies. He will never ſuffer his Faithfulneſs to fail, for he is *not a man that he ſhould lye, or the ſon of man that he ſhould repent(k)*. And of this we ſhould endeavour to be the more firmly perſuaded, becauſe there are ſome Appearances in the Conduct of divine Providence which at preſent we cannot eaſily reconcile to it; no more than we can to his Wiſdom, which is all owing to our Want of Knowledge and Foreſight. GOD *ſees not as man ſees. But let Him be true though every man a Lyar (l)*.

5. GOD is a moſt Juſt and Righteous Being; *who will render to every one according to his Ways, and according to the fruit of his Doings (m). The Wicked ſhall not ſtand in Judgment, but ſhall be turned into Hell, and all*

(k) Numb. xxiii. 19. (l) Rom. iii. 4. (m) Jer. xvii. 10.

*all the Nations that forget* God (*n*). So that the present Impunity of Sinners is no just Foundation for their Security; for, since God is the most righteous Judge and Governor of the World, however it goes with them now, they shall certainly meet with their just Deserts hereafter. SERM. V.

*Lastly*, we must at the same Time remember that he is a Being of infinite Mercy. And this he hath been pleased to represent as his most distinguished Attribute. *His Mercy endureth for ever*, and Goodness is his Glory. And the infinite Compassion and Benignity of his nature have been many a time displayed to us in a manner very astonishing; especially in that most amazing Transaction (in which he hath opened to us the unsearchable Depths of his Love and Mercy) the Redemption of an Apostate World by the Death of his Son.

Such Apprehensions as these should we always entertain of the ever Blessed God, and banish from our Minds all those which are in the least degree dishonourable to the Infinite Perfections of his Nature. I proceed now



(*n*) Psa. ix. 17.

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2. To enquire into the Efficacy and Influence this Knowledge of GOD ought to have upon us.

And this point deſerves a more particular Attention becauſe it is well known that many have ſuch a Knowledge of GOD as hath been before deſcribed who are not at all the better for it; who have juſt and right Conceptions of the Divine Being without thoſe correſpondent Practical Regards which are due to him, and which ſuch Sentiments are proper to excite; whoſe Knowledge reſts in the Head and never deſcends into the Heart: *who though they know* GOD *yet glorify him not as* GOD. The Deſign or End of Knowledge is not only to enlarge and enlighten the Mind, but to direct the Practice and mend the Heart. And no Knowledge is of uſe any farther than it anſwers this end. It is therefore an Enquiry of very great Importance, what Effect hath the Knowledge of GOD upon my Life and Temper? What it ought to have I am now briefly to ſhew. And

1. Do we believe that GOD is a Being of Almighty *Power* and Incomprehenſible Majeſty? with what humble Reverence then ſhould

ſhould we always adore him! O, who ſhould not fear that tremendous Power who ſpake all things into Being, and can in an Inſtant ſpeak us into nothing! Who is always able to ſave and protect his Friends, but whoſe Anger is armed with Omnipotence to take Vengeance on his Enemies! If this Sentiment of the Deity do not inſpire us with an habitual Reverence of him, it has not it's proper Effect, and we may juſtly be ſaid not to know him, or to be ſtill ignorant of that Attribute of Almighty Power, ſo clearly diſcovered in his Word and Works. SERM. V.

2. Is GOD a moſt *Holy* Being? How ſhould we aſpire then to be like him; and how humble ſhould we be that we are no more ſo! Holineſs muſt transform us into the Divine Likeneſs, e'er we can be happy in the Divine Love: the former is the Perfection, the latter the Felicity of all Intelligent Creatures. But, O, how defective are we in that very Thing wherein the Perfection and Happineſs of our Nature do ſo eſſentially conſiſt! With what ſelf abaſement ſhould we addreſs the moſt Holy GOD, *who is of purer Eyes than that he can behold Iniquity!* Which ſhould directly lead our Thoughts to the gra-

cious

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cious Diſcoveries of the Goſpel, and the method which GOD hath there revealed, whereby he is recovering degenerate Creatures to Holineſs and Happineſs by the Mediation of his dear Son and the Grace of his Holy Spirit.

3. Is GOD a Being of unerring and unſearchable *Wiſdom*? He is; we know he is; his Word and Works and Ways do all declare it. This then ſhould lead us to ſeek to and depend upon him for that Wiſdom we want, and which he giveth *liberally* to them that aſk it of him *(o)*. In his Wiſdom let us ſee our Folly, and the Folly of all the Ways and Wiſdom of the World. O, with what Contempt ſhall we look upon all the Wiſdom of worldly-minded men (than whom none are wiſer in their own Eyes) whilſt we are deeply engaged in the Contemplation of the Wiſdom of GOD! The man that truly knows GOD will not *lean to his own Underſtanding, but will truſt in the Lord with all his might.*

4. Is GOD moſt *true* and *faithful* to his word, and do we believe and know that he is ſo? then let us firmly believe and depend upon the Truth of all that he hath promiſed or

*(o)* Jam. i. 5.

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or threatened, whatever Difficulties some of his Providences may seem to throw in the way of such Belief. Every man whose Life and Character is a contradiction to his Faith does in effect *make* GOD *a Lyar*; and whatever he professes he evidently shews that he does not in reality believe that GOD will ever execute what he hath promised or threatened in his Word. It is to him a *dead letter*; and has no more effect upon him than if he was a dead man; as indeed he is in a spiritual sense, *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. If we do indeed believe that GOD is most faithful and true, we shall in virtue of that Belief with reverence receive all the sacred Declarations of his Word, and readily submit your Faith and Practice to it.

5. He that rightly knows GOD will fear him, and stand in awe of his *Justice*; which will at length take place of his Patience, and be conspicuously displayed in the Condemnation of those incorrigible Creatures whom all the Methods of his Grace and Mercy could not reclaim. Nothing sets a keener Edge on the Sword of Justice than Patience long abused; and nothing brings it down with greater

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greater Weight on the Sinners Head than a long Defiance of the almighty Arm that weilds it. *Becauſe Judgment againſt a wicked Work is not ſpeedily executed*, how often is *the Heart of the Children of men fully ſet in them to do Evil!* But moſt certain it is that they who have not *the Fear of the Lord before their Eyes* are the Perſons that *know not* GOD. Whatever pretenſions they make to the Knowledge of GOD, they evidently ſhew hereby that they know him not.

*Laſtly*, His diſtinguiſhing *Love* and *Goodneſs* ſhould fill our Hearts with the warmeſt Gratitude and our Lives with inceſſant Praiſes. For whom ſhould we love if not the beſt of Beings? What demands our Eſteem if not the ſupreme Excellence? whoſe Nature is Love, whoſe Delight is Mercy, and who glories in his Goodneſs: who communicates all that is excellent and lovely to every thing we love: from whom all Happineſs ſprings, in whom all Excellence unites; the Source and Centre of univerſal Good. Let us ſhew then that we know God indeed by loving him with all our Heart, and delighting to converſe with him in Prayer and pious Contemplations;

plations; for they that love God most do surely know him best. SERM. V.

Such is the Influence which the Knowledge of God ought to have upon the Heart and Life, and which in some Degree it will have when it becomes a saving Grace. And because the true Knowledge of God always includes these practical Regards to him, it is therefore so often put to comprehend the whole of Religion in the old Testament, as the Knowledge of Christ is in the new, and whenever the Phrase is used in this comprehensive Sense it is always with a special Reference to these practical Effects.

Thus have I considered the first Part of the Exhortation which *David* gave to his Son *Solomon*; in which I have been the more particular, not only because it is the first Principle of all Religion, and when taken in a proper Latitude comprehensive of it, but because it is the Foundation of the Advice immediately following, *viz. to serve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind*: the consideration of which I must reserve for the ensuing Discourse.

And to conclude, as a proper Improvement of the whole, let us every one carefully

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fully examine ourſelves upon this Subject. And it is to be feared that upon ſuch a Scrutiny we ſhall be found more defective in this very firſt principle of Religion than we before could well imagine. We believe there is a GOD, and we profeſs to know him: we know he is a Being of Almighty Power, perfect Purity, unerring Wiſdom, immutable Truth, inflexible Juſtice, and infinite Mercy: from our Childhood we have been taught thus to think and thus to ſpeak of GOD. But do we find that our Temper and Behaviour towards him are ſuitable to thoſe Sentiments which we have conceived of him? Do we honour him? do we imitate him? do we ſeek him? do we truſt him? do we fear and love him with all our Hearts? If not, alas! what good does all our pretended Knowledge of GOD do us? what does it differ from, or what is it better than mere Ignorance? It differs from it indeed thus far, that it will make our future Condemnation the more grievous. Dreadful Thought! O then! let us often recollect

(*e*) Pſalm ix. 16.

lect our Notions of GOD, and think what it is we believe and profess to know of that great, tremendous Being whom we call GOD, that so with the entire Homage and Devotion of our Souls we *may glorify him as* GOD. SERM. V.

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# SERMON VI.

## To ſerve GOD the beſt Way to proſper in the World.

1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

*And thou Solomon my Son know thou the* GOD *of thy Father, and ſerve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: for the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

THESE words may be conſidered as the Advice of a dying Father, and to a Son who was going to ſet out in the World, and enter on the buſy active Scenes of Life; which ſhould

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ſhould eſpecially recommend them to the Attention of thoſe who are, or ſhortly expect to be in the like Situation.

They are divided into two Parts, *viz.* The Exhortation which *David* gives to his Son *Solomon*, contained in the former Part of the Verſe; and the Motives by which that Exhortation is urged, contained in the latter.

The Exhortation itſelf is compriſed under three Heads.

I. To know GOD.
II. To ſerve him.
III. The Manner in which he is to be ſerved.

The firſt of theſe was the Subject of the preceeding Diſcourſe; I now proceed immediately to conſider the ſecond Branch of the Exhortation, *viz*

II. To ſerve GOD.

*And thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father and* SERVE *him.*

As the Knowledge of GOD is to be the chief Employment of our Minds, ſo the Service of GOD ſhould be the great Buſineſs of our Lives. And then only do we live

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up to the Deſign of our Being, and the Dignity of a rational Nature. The Propoſition therefore which I ſhall lay down from theſe Words to be diſcourſed upon at this Time is this,

That the beſt Way to ſecure the Bleſſing of GOD, and Succeſs in our Worldly Affairs, is to make his Service our great Buſineſs and chief Concern in Life.

In treating of which Propoſition, the two following Things require a particular Conſideration,

1. What it is to ſerve GOD; or wherein that Service of GOD conſiſts which we ſhould all of us, eſpecially they who are ſetting out in the World, make our great Buſineſs and chief Concern in Life.

2. What a tendency this hath to ſecure the favour of GOD and his Bleſſing upon all our ſecular Affairs.

1. We are to conſider what it is to ſerve GOD; or wherein that Service of GOD conſiſts which we ſhould all of us, eſpecially they who are ſetting out in the World, make our great Buſineſs and chief Concern in Life.

To

To serve God is to obey him, or practise all those Duties of Piety and Virtue which he hath enjoined us. SERM. VI.

1. To serve God is sincerely to practice all the Duties of Piety: that is, the Duties which we more immediately owe to Him. And these are either of a private or a publick Nature. I shall consider each of them distinctly. Therefore

1. Would we serve God so as to hope for his Blessing and Favour we must take heed to our private Devotions.

When we are retired from the World we must remember still to behave ourselves as in the Presence of that God *who seeth in secret:* and take as much Care to guard our Thoughts under his Eye, as we do to guard our Conduct under the Eye of Men.

The Devotions of the Closet (which no Christian that has any right Sense of Religion can content himself to live in the Neglect of) are Reading, Meditation and Prayer. And the great End of these devotional Exercises of the Oratory is to keep up an Acquaintance with God and our own Souls; and to recover those pious Frames and recall those serious Thoughts which the importunate Cares

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and Pleaſures of this World are too apt to diſſipate. And in the Conduct of our Cloſet Devotions (on which the Life of Religion ſo much depends) the following Rules may be of Uſe.

With regard to Reading, let your Bible be your principal Book; and let thoſe Parts of it be the chief Subject of your Thoughts which are moſt plain, practical, and important: ſuch as the Book of *Pſalms*, *Proverbs*, *Eccleſiaſtes*, the four *Goſpels*, and Saint *Paul's Epiſtles*; eſpecially the latter Parts of them.

Read but little at a Time; and think over and over again of what you read, till you not only underſtand it, but enter into the Spirit, ſee the Force, and feel the Weight of it. And when you meet with an Obſervation or Direction peculiarly ſuited to your own Caſe, Experience, or Circumſtances, mark it, and lay it up in the Memory for future Uſe.——Read only with a View to have your Heart warmed or mended, and to receive ſome Inſtruction immediately from GOD himſelf.—— And as for other Books, uſe none in your Cloſet that are controverſial or difficult to be underſtood; but only thoſe that are moſt plain and devotional, moſt

moſt ſuited to your Capacity and Taſte, and moſt proper to excite a true Spirit of Devotion in the Heart.——Read with Recollection and Thought; and leave off when the attention flags *. SERM. VI.

With regard to Meditation, another Part of ſecret Employment, your great Buſineſs will be to fix the Thoughts and keep them from rambling or ſtarting aſide from the Subject. And in order to engage them, chuſe the moſt important and moſt intereſting Subjects; for Inſtance, Death, Eternity, the laſt Judgment, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Homage that is due to that great GOD who gave Being to you and the univerſal Creation. Such ſublime and ſerious Subjects are fit to keep the Mind intent, and excite a ſpirit of warm Devotion.

And let Self-examination be always a part of this private mental Employment.——



* Of the many excellent Treatiſes which are ſuited to inſpire a rational and ſolid Devotion I would particularly recommend the following — *Bennet's* Chriſtian Oratory. *Scougal's* Life of GOD in the Soul of Man. *Stanhope's Thomas a Kempis*, on the Imitation of *Chriſt*. *Juricu's* Method of Chriſtian Devotion, tranſlated by Biſhop *Fleetwood*.——And to thoſe of a more elevated taſte, Dr. *Young's* Night thoughts, Mr. *Harvey's* Meditations Dr. *Watts's* Pſalms and Hymns, and Mrs. *Rowe's* devout exerciſes of the Heart.

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Think what you are like to be a few Years hence, when you will be in another World; what is the State and Temper of your Soul now; what good Hope you have of your Sincerity and Intereſt in the Redemption of Chriſt; and how ſad a Thing it will be for your poor immortal Soul to be torn away from the Body without any ſuch ſolid Hope at Death! — Look over your Foibles, your conſtitutional Sins, the peculiar Temptations of your Temper and Circumſtances, what Advantages you gain over them; and in ſhort, whether you are going backward or forward in Religion; whether you are more lively, and watchful, and diligent in the concerns of your Soul, and more in good earneſt in the Service of GOD than you ever was; or degenerating into a ſtupid neglect of Duty, and a formal Luke-warmneſs and Indifference about the beſt things. Let Conſcience be the impartial Judge, and be readily open to Conviction whatever be it's Verdict.

With Regard to ſecret Prayer, be not over-ſolicitous about the Manner of Expreſſion. It is the Language of the Heart which GOD looks at; the Frame of the Heart then

ſhould

ſhould be your principal Care. He knows the Deſires of the Heart before they are expreſſed: and if they be warm, devout, and holy, he will anſwer them however poorly expreſſed, or if they cannot be expreſſed at all. For we read in Scripture of *Prayers* conſiſting of *Groans that cannot be uttered*, and in the ſame place alſo are told that ſuch Kind of Prayers may be from the *Spirit of* God, *which helpeth our Infirmities (a)*. That is, not ſo much the Infirmities of the Speech as thoſe of the Heart; for our greateſt Infirmities lie there.—Let that be the principal Subject of your Prayer which moſt affected your mind in your previous Meditations: Pray over what you had been reading and thinking of; this will tend to engage the Heart ſtill further, and make your Prayers more fervent, devout, and profitable. And when the Chriſtian's Heart is once habitually accuſtomed to and engaged in theſe devotional Exerciſes, he will find theſe ſtated Seaſons of Retirement to converſe with God and his Soul not only the moſt uſeful but the moſt delightful Part of his Time.

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But

(a) Rom. viii. 26.

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But under the Head of private Devotion (in which the Service of GOD ſo much conſiſts) we muſt not forget *Family Religion*; which every Maſter of a Family that fears GOD will keep up in ſome Shape or other. This conſiſts of Reading, Prayer, and ſeaſonable Exhortation.——The Word of GOD muſt be frequently and ſeriouſly read in every Family that expects the Bleſſing of GOD upon it. Nor is Family-prayer by any means to be neglected; which is properly the Duty of the Maſter or Head of the Family. And if it cannot be performed with that Freedom, Propriety, and Enlargement, which is ſuited to Edification, without a Form, it ought to be performed with it. And a judicious, well compoſed Form of Prayer, ſeriouſly and devoutly read in the Family every Day is the leaſt that is required, and will not be diſpenſed with by thoſe who ſincerely deſire to ſerve GOD according to their Ability and to ſet a good Example to others.——And here I would beg Leave particularly to recommend the Importance of this Duty to thoſe who lately have been, or ſoon may be, called by providence to appear in this Character at the Head of a Family

Family: becauſe the Neglect of it at firſt will render the Performance thereof much more difficult hereafter, and by Degrees wear off a Senſe of its Importance; though the total Neglect of it is an unknown Prejudice to the lower Branches of the Family at preſent, and diffuſes it's bad Effects far and wide into Poſterity.—And to Reading and Prayer ſhould be added ſeaſonable Exhortation; or an Endeavour to convey to the Minds of Children und Servants the moſt important Points of Religious Knowledge, by catechizing, familiar Queſtions, and explaining to them what they read or hear in a plain and eaſy Manner ſuitable to the Size of their Underſtanding.—Theſe then are the more private Duties of Piety and Devotion wherein the *Service of* God doth ſo much conſiſt. But SERM. V.

2. There are other Duties of a more publick Nature wherein we are required to ſerve God; and which are in general eſteemed ſo eſſential to Religion that they have by way of Eminence obtained the Name of *Divine Service:* viz. the Worſhip of God in his Houſe.

One who makes the Service of God the Buſineſs of his Life will readily afford his Atten-

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Attendance upon theſe; not only to give a Teſtimony of his willing Obedience to all the Commandments of GOD, but to ſet an Example of the ſame to others. Every truly pious Man has a reliſh for Divine Ordinances, and finds his chief Delight therein, as *David* did. They will be ſo far from being a Burden and Weariſomneſs to him, that he will ſpare no Pains to attend them, or attending them to get Good thereby. He will ſtir up his Heart and guard his Thoughts, and ſet himſelf as in the Preſence of GOD to *worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth*, as he requires. He will *take heed how he hears*; remembring that he muſt hereafter give an account of theſe ſacred Opportunities, ſo graciouſly afforded him for his ſpiritual Improvement; and that in all Likelihood he will be the better or the worſe for every Ordinance on which he attends.

This then is the firſt thing in which the Service of GOD conſiſts; *viz.* a regular and devout Regard to all the private and publick Duties of Piety, or ſuch as we more immediately owe to GOD himſelf. But this is not all. There is another great Branch of Religion, or another Way wherein we are required

required to ſerve GOD, which is no leſs neceſſary than this. And that is

2. By a Religious Regard to all thoſe Duties which we owe more immediately to our Fellow-creatures and to ourſelves.

GOD hath given us a Law divided into two Parts; commonly called the *firſt* and the *ſecond Table*, (becauſe it was originally written upon two Tables of Stone) the firſt containing the Duties we owe to GOD, or the Duties of Piety; the other, thoſe we owe to Man, or the Duties of Virtue. To both theſe ſhould we have an equal Regard as a Rule of Life; and not ſet them in oppoſition, as ſome do; or break them both by daſhing one againſt the other, as *Moſes* did.

Concerning the Duties of the ſecond Table, which as the Servants of GOD we are obliged inviolably to obſerve as our only Rule to direct and regulate all our Commerce with Mankind, I ſhall only obſerve, that whilſt we are endeavouring to exemplify in our ſelves and cultivate in others, a Temper of Peace, Unanimity and Meekneſs, Benevolence, Lenity and Love, Equity, Moderation and Candour, the great Duties which

we

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we owe to others, and which the Goſpel indiſpenſably binds upon us as Chriſtians; and at the ſame time are induſtrious in our ſeveral Callings, watchful and wiſe in our Walk, patient in Tribulation, content with our Lot, temperate in the uſe of Pleaſures, and humble in our own Thoughts, and are daily aiming to improve more and more in theſe good Diſpoſitions; I ſay, whilſt we are thus ſincerely endeavouring to practice and promote theſe ſocial and human Virtues in their proper Extent and Influence, we are ſerving GOD as acceptably, and in a Manner which as much becomes us, as when we are immediately engaged in the Duties of the Oratory, or Sanctuary. For it is a very great and miſchievous Miſtake to think that Religion conſiſts altogether in the Duties of Piety; or to run into the other Extreme, and confine it too much to thoſe of Virtue. A conſiſtent Chriſtian will have a due Regard to both. And it is certain that we ſerve GOD and honour Religion as much by Diligence in our Callings, Induſtry in doing good and employing our Talents for the Service of Mankind, and promoting the Intereſt of Virtue in our ſeveral Stations at reaſona-

reaſonable Times, as we do at other Times by attending the Solemnities of inſtituted Worſhip.—I proceed now

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II. To ſhew you what a Tendency the ſerving GOD in this Manner has to ſecure his Favour and Bleſſing in all our ſecular Concerns.

That it has ſuch a Tendency is plainly implied in the Words before us, and ſeems to be directly referred to in the Advice which *David* here gives to his Son *Solomon*; who was juſt about to ſet out in the World and to immerſe in all the Cares of publick Life. As if he had ſaid —'my Dear Son, take 'the Counſel of an aged Father; for I ſpeak 'by Experience, having already paſſed 'through thoſe dangerous Scenes upon which 'you are going to enter; and be aſſured 'that the beſt Way to ſecure the Divine 'Bleſſing in all your publick Affairs and 'private Concerns, is to keep up a reve-'rent Senſe of GOD in your Heart, and make 'Conſcience of your Duty and his Service at 'all Times. If you thus keep cloſe to *him* 'he will be ever preſent with you, to bleſs. 'aſſiſt, and direct you, in all the weighty

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'Affairs of Life and Government.' — And that a conſcientious Regard to GOD and his Service is the beſt Way to ſecure his Bleſſing and derive Succeſs on our Worldly Affairs, is evident from the Promiſes which GOD hath made in his Word, from the Nature and Connexion of things, and from conſtant Experience and Obſervation.

1. It is evident from the Promiſes which GOD hath made in his Word, that he will bleſs them that fear him and are faithful to his Covenant. For *Godlineſs is profitable for all things, and hath the Promiſe of the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come* (*b*). We are told that *it is the Lord that giveth Power to get Wealth* (*c*). And *it is the Bleſſing of the* LORD *that maketh Rich* (*d*). And who are they that ſtand faireſt for his Bleſſing, but thoſe that are moſt diligent in his Service? How many are the temporal Bleſſings promiſed in Scripture to thoſe that are *upright in Heart* and who *walk before* GOD *in Truth? They that ſeek the* LORD *ſhall not want any good Thing* (*e*). *The* LORD GOD *is their Sun and Shield* (*f*). *The Meek ſhall*

(*b*) 1 Tim. iv. 8. (*c*) Deut. viii. 18. (*d*) Prov. x. 22.
(*e*) Pſa. xxxiv. 10. (*f*) Pſa. lxxxiv. 2.

*ſhall inherit the Earth,* (*g*). *All Things work together for good to them that love* GOD (*b*). And *he giveth to a Man that is good in his Sight, Wiſdom, and Knowledge, and Joy* (*i*). It were almoſt endleſs and altogether needleſs to enumerate the ſeveral Promiſes of this Nature that are to be found in the Word of GOD. The few that are here mentioned are ſufficient to prove the Point in Hand. SERM. VI.

2. That to mind Religion and live up to the Obligations of it is the beſt Way to proſper in the World is apparent from the very Nature and Connexion of Things. *Godlineſs with Contentment is great Gain*, not only in it's Effects and Conſequences with Regard to another Life, but in it's own Nature and Tendency with Regard to the preſent. It ſecures to a Man the moſt durable Peace, the moſt valuable Poſſeſſions, and gives him much more Satisfaction and Comfort in that Share of the World which Providence hath allotted him than the moſt affluent Fortune ever afforded, which I take to be the Meaning of that Promiſe, *Bleſſed are the Meek, for they ſhall inherit the Earth.*

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(*g*) Mat. v. 5. (*b*) Rom. viii. 28. (*i*) Eccleſ. ii. 26.

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A ſteady Regard to the Rules of Piety and Virtue preſerves a Man from running into thoſe vicious Habits and Cuſtoms which are very expenſive and ſometimes ruinous to the ſecular Intereſts of thoſe that are adicted to them; as Luxury, Exceſs, and Intemperance of all kinds, Pride, Affectation of Pomp, Senſuality and a boundleſs Love of Pleaſures; Diſpoſitions, not only in themſelves criminal, but which cannot be gratified without great Expence. Whereas a Man who practiſes that Frugality, Temperance, Humility, and Self-denial, which Religion teaches him, is not only content, well pleaſed and thankful, but enjoys himſelf better, is more free from Want, Vexation and Sorrow than thoſe who are ambitious to outſhine him; and is really of too noble a Mind to affect that Flaſh of Grandeur and falſe Superiority which captivate little Minds, and often run them into Ruin.

Beſides, Religion not only preſerves us from many expenſive and ruinous Vices, but obliges us to the Practice of that Integrity, Wiſdom, and Induſtry, which have a natural Tendency to improve our Circumſtances. It lays no exorbitant Tax on our Time,

time, requires no unſeaſonable exerciſes of Devotion, and obliges us to no Duties that are inconſiſtent with a proper care and management of our worldly Affairs: and not only allows, but recommends and enjoins an active Diligence and Application in thoſe ſeveral Callings and Occupations wherein Providence hath placed us, and made us capable of being uſeful to ourſelves and others. So that if to be wiſe and good be not always the ſureſt and ſhorteſt way to be rich and great, it is however the beſt way to ſecure a Competency, and with it Satisfaction and Peace; which a man who raiſes a Fortune by wicked and diſhoneſt arts can never enjoy. Alas, what can the greateſt Affluence in the World do for that Man who hath loſt his Character and his Conſcience in procuring it? It makes him but the more illuſtrious Wretch; little and vile in the Eyes both of GOD and Man; and great only in his own, or in theirs who are as much abandoned as himſelf. But the man who makes the Service of GOD the great Buſineſs of his Life is not only in the ſureſt way of ſecuring a Competency, but the Bleſſing and Preſence of GOD with it, which

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gives him a double Enjoyment of it. For *in the Houſe of the Righteous there is much Treaſure, but in the Revenues of the Wicked is Trouble (k). Better is a little with the fear of the* LORD, *than great Treaſure and Trouble therewith (l).*

*Laſtly*, This is confirmed by conſtant Experience and Obſervation. For if we look out into the World, where do we find an Inſtance of any one reduced to Poverty and Diſtreſs by keeping cloſe to GOD and the rules of Wiſdom and Religion? but how many thouſands do we ſee involved in Calamity and Ruin by forſaking them? I will not ſay, there are no Inſtances of Perſons depreſſed purely in a Providential way, by ſome unforeſeen and unavoidable Diſappointments; but Religion is ſo far from being the Cauſe of theſe, that it is their great Support and Comfort under them. And the Inſtances of thoſe who are oppreſſed by Providence are exceeding few, in compariſon with thoſe who ruin their Affairs by their own Vice and Folly.

So that upon the whole it is very evident, that Religion has a direct Tendency to make our

(k) Prov. xv. 6. (l) Prov. xv. 16.

our Affairs proſperous in *this* World; to ſay nothing of the glorious and unſpeakable Recompences of the *other*. SERM. VI.

I have now gone through the two things I propoſed, and ſhewn you in general wherein the Service of GOD doth conſiſt, and that it hath a certain tendency to promote the ſucceſs of our ſecular Concerns.— *In what manner* GOD *is to be acceptably ſerved*, which is the next thing that falls under Conſideration, will be the Subject of the following Diſcourſe. Two Reflections ſhall conclude this. And

1. How greatly miſtaken then are they who think to proſper in the World by ſtepping aſide out of the way of Duty; or who dare to violate the ſacred Obligations of Virtue and Religion for the ſake of a temporal Advantage. They may poſſibly gain their End, and get an Eſtate as the wages of their Unrighteouſneſs in this World. For GOD ſometimes ſuffers the Wicked to flouriſh in their Way, and to proſper not only *in* but *by* their Iniquity. But now let us make a brief Eſtimate of their Accounts.—They have gained, it may be, a heap of Wealth; and all that Pomp, Power, and Pride, which

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often attend it.——But what have they loſt in the Acquiſition? What have they parted with for it? Why, almoſt every thing which a wiſe Man would think valuable. They have loſt their Character, their Peace, their good Name, their Friends, their Conſcience, their GOD, and their Heaven for it. What a Sacrifice is here made by the Devotees of *Mammon!* whilſt they are inwardly tortured that they can gain no more of the World, though they have not a Heart perhaps to uſe or enjoy what they have.— This is the Man that *hath made Gold his Hope, and hath ſaid to the fine Gold, thou art my Confidence (m).* Whereas, had they continued faithful to GOD and Conſcience, though they might not have had ſo large an Eſtate, they would have enjoyed Peace, and Comfort, and the ſincereſt and moſt valuable Friendſhips in the World, (which, by the way, is a pleaſure the mere Worlding is an utter ſtranger to) and, which is infinitely above all, would have enjoyed the Friendſhip of GOD, the Teſtimony of Conſcience, and the Hope of Heaven. And which of theſe Conditions now would not a

(m) Job. xxxi. 24.

a Wiſe man rather chuſe?——Sure, *the God of this World hath blinded the Eyes* of none more fatally, than of thoſe who are willing to part with every thing for it! whilſt the poor Creatures never once conſider that they muſt very ſoon part with this too.—But the Quinteſſence of their Folly lies in this; that they would fain be thought, nay inſiſt upon it, that after all they are the only wiſe men in the World.—Which, if it were not indeed a very melancholy and deplorable Caſe, were enough to provoke a ſmile. But the Caſe of ſuch men is too miſerable to be laughed at; they are more properly the Objects of our Compaſſion; and ſhould be a ſolemn warning to us leſt we *fall into* the ſame *Temptation and Snare, and thoſe fooliſh and hurtful Luſts which drown men in Deſtruction and Perdition (n).* And now SERM. VI.

2. Before I conclude, I would beg leave ſeriouſly to urge this Exhortation upon thoſe who are in the age of Youth, and are ſhortly to make their Appearance on the buſy ſtage of Life; and earneſtly beſeech them to take the Advice which *David* here gives to his Son *Solomon* in like Circumſtances.



(n) 1 Tim. vi. 9.

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My dear young Friends, whatever be the Object of your Ambition and Purſuit, take care you do not leave Religion behind you. Whatever you deſire to know, or be, or do in the World, be ſure to *know the* GOD *of your Fathers, and to ſerve him.* Above all things be concerned to cultivate and keep up a Friendſhip with that almighty Being who is the author of yours, and who has the diſpoſal of thoſe Comforts and Conveniencies of Life which you moſt deſire, and who can beſtow them upon you, or take them from you as he thinks fit.---Whatever you do, dare not to go one Step out of the way of Duty for the ſake of worldly Profit, that fatal Snare that hath drawn ſo many wretched Souls to Ruin. Be faithful to your Conſcience and your GOD, and you will find GOD and Conſcience to be your beſt Friends. Fear not by a ſteady Adherence to the Obligations of Truth and Integrity that you ſhall be a Loſer in your worldly Intereſt: believe it, you will in the end be the greateſt Gainer thereby, even as to this World; as you have juſt been hearing. Deſpiſe then all the little low arts of Diſſimulation and Fraud; though they may not amount to down-

downright Knavery, they will but leſſen your Character and render you the more ſuſpected; and are unworthy both the Man and the Chriſtian. Be it your firſt Concern to approve your Heart to GOD and then to Man; to practiſe the private and publick Duties of Piety, and then thoſe of Humanity and Virtue. SERM. VI.

In a word, would you be loved and eſteemed both by GOD and Man, would you live uſefully and comfortably in this World under the chearing and ſolid Hopes of a better, would you proſper on Earth and be prepared for Heaven; O, *know then the* GOD *of your Fathers and ſerve him.* Remember your pious Anceſtors who have trod the ſame dangerous Paths of Life you are entering upon, and through Grace have been preſerved in and conducted through the fatal Snares of it. Be ſolicitous for the ſame Grace and Guidance they had to be your Convoy through the ſame Dangers. Imitate their pious and good Examples: and their GOD will be *your* GOD, *and your Guide even unto Death*; and then after a ſhort Paſſage through a troubleſome World

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(for however troubleſome a Paſſage it may be it cannot be long) you ſhall *go to their Father and your Father, to their* GOD *and your* GOD; and together with them be unſpeakably happy in the Favour of that ever bleſſed Being *World without end.* AMEN!

SER-

# SERMON VII.

## In what Manner we are to ſerve GOD.

1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

*And thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* GOD *of thy Father, and ſerve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: for the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

NEXT to the Knowledge of GOD, his Nature and Attributes, there is nothing of greater Concern to us than to know how we are to ſerve him. And therefore the

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the holy Scriptures, (as a perfect Rule to direct us in the ways of Duty and Happineſs,) diſtinctly ſhew us, not only what that GOD is whom we are to worſhip, but *in what manner* he is to be acceptably worſhipped. And though in the preceding Diſcourſe I explained the Expreſſion of *ſerving* GOD in its greateſt Latitude, as comprehenſive of all the Duties of *Piety* and *Virtue*, yet as it is often uſed to denote the *former* by way of eminence, I ſhall here confine myſelf to that Senſe of it, as referring to the *Worſhip* of GOD; eſpecially as this ſeems principally to be intended in the Advice which *David* here gives to his Son *Solomon*, to ſerve GOD *with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind.*

Under the Diſpenſation of the new Teſtament there is a further Direction of a more peculiar Nature relating to the Manner wherein the Worſhip of GOD is to be performed, to which we are bound to pay a ſpecial regard in all our religious Approaches to him. Chriſtians muſt ſerve GOD not only *with a perfect Heart* and a *willing Mind*, but *in the name of* CHRIST. And though it is plain this was no part of *David*'s Charge to his Son,

Son, yet a Diſcourſe on the right way of worſhipping GOD, deſigned for the Benefit of Chriſtians, would be juſtly conſidered as very defective without it. SERM. VII.

What I propoſe therefore is

I. To conſider that Rule of Worſhip laid down in the Text, which we ſhould carefully obſerve in all our Religious Tranſactions with GOD.

II. The peculiar Manner of the Chriſtian Worſhip, as it is to be performed *in the Name of* CHRIST.

III. Conclude with practical Reflections upon the Subject.

I. I am to conſider that Rule of Worſhip laid down in the Text, which we ſhould carefully obſerve in all our Religious Tranſactions with GOD.

This is two-fold. 1. We muſt worſhip GOD with a *perfect Heart*. 2. With a *willing Mind*. To conſider each of theſe diſtinctly.

1. We muſt worſhip GOD with a *perfect Heart*.

It

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It is the *Heart* which he calls for (*a*), and if we give him not the Heart he will accept of nothing elſe in it's ſtead. By the Heart we are to underſtand the Intentions, Diſpoſitions and Affections of the Mind, which muſt be *upright*, *pure* and *engaged* in the Service of GOD. For all this is comprehended in the Phraſe, ſerving GOD *with a perfect Heart*: more particularly

1. To ſerve GOD with a *perfect* Heart is to ſerve him with an *upright* Heart; or, in the Language of the new Teſtament, *in Spirit and in Truth* (*b*). Sincerity is all the Perfection of which frail and fallen Man is capable. The Man who is upright in his Aims and Views to pleaſe GOD, and ſincere in his Endeavours to approve himſelf to him in the whole of his Conduct, under the Influence of a religious Principle, that Man, notwithſtanding thoſe unallowed Eſcapes and Inadvertences with which he may be ſometimes chargeable, is ſtill a *perfect* Man in the Scripture Senſe of the word. Such perfect Men were *Abraham*, *Job*, and *Aſa*; of which laſt it is ſaid that *his Heart was perfect*

(*a*) Prov. xxiii. 26. (*b*) John iv. 24.

*perfect with the* LORD *all his Days (c)*: though all of them had their Failings. SERM. VII.

Which ſuch Sincerity or Uprightneſs of Heart then muſt we ſerve GOD if we expect to be accepted of him. And this ſtands in Oppoſition to Hypocriſy or falſe Views in Worſhip; which is the greateſt Imperfection that can attend it. When we come to GOD without any Concern at all to pleaſe him, or to have our Services accepted of him, but merely out of Form or Cuſtom, becauſe others do ſo, and we would not appear ſingular, or diſtinguiſh our ſelves by abſenting from the Place of publick Worſhip; this is not to ſerve GOD with a *perfect*, but with a *falſe Heart*. And ſuch Falſehood and Hypocriſy renders the *Sacrifices of the Wicked an Abomination to the* LORD.

2. A perfect Heart is a *pure* Heart. And this ſtands in Oppoſition to all vile Affections and corrupt Ends in Worſhip. To this Purity of Heart it is that *David* refers when he ſais, *I will waſh mine Hands in Innocency, ſo will I compaſs thine Altar, O* LORD *(d)*. For, ſais he in another place, *if I indulge Iniquity in my Heart the* LORD *will*

(c) 1 Kings xv. 14. (d) Pſal. xxvi. 6.

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*will not hear me.* There must be no latent Disaffection to GOD, no lurking Malevolence to our Neighbour harboured in the Heart when we come *to pay our Vows unto the* LORD: for that will corrupt our Oblation, and is no less offensive to him now, than it would be to have offered the blind, the lame, the maimed, to him in Sacrifice under the Law. And there stands a terrible Denunciation in Scripture against all such corrupt and false Worshippers; *Malachi* i. 14. *cursed be the Deceiver who hath in his Flock a Male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the* LORD *a corrupt thing.* The reason is, *for I am a great King saith the* LORD *of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the Heathen*; much more should it be sanctified and revered by his own people. He is a pure and holy GOD, and therefore none but the most pure and holy Oblations are worthy him to accept, or us to make.

3. A perfect Heart is a *devout* and *engaged* Heart. This stands opposed to two things, *viz.* worldly and wandering Thoughts, and a dull and drowzy Frame in Worship.

Vain

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Vain and vagrant Thoughts are too apt to intrude into and ſpoil our beſt Devotions. This is what a good Man calls a *wandering Heart*; which is the frequent Cauſe of his Grief and Self-abaſement before GOD. How often does this Conſideration mortify, humble, and deject him! and it is fit it ſhould do ſo. But ſome Comfort may ariſe out of this very Sorrow. It is a good Symptom; it is a ſign that he is not altogether ignorant or careleſs of his Heart. And to be ſenſible of a Malady is the firſt Step to a Remedy. A humble Chriſtian therefore ought not to carry this Conviction too far; or conclude from hence that his Worſhip is all Hypocriſy, if he daily watches, ſtrives and prays againſt theſe involuntary Infirmities. He may worſhip GOD with a *perfect Heart* in the Scripture Senſe of the Word, even under many ſenſible Imperfections; provided he be in good earneſt and ſincere in his Endeavours to oppoſe thoſe Imperfections and to conquer them; and to attain that happy and devout Frame of Spirit *David* was in when he ſaid, *my Heart is fixed, O* GOD, *my Heart is fixed (e)*.

Again,

(e) Pſal. lvii. 7.

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Again, to worſhip GOD, with a devout and engaged Heart ſtands oppoſed to a dull and drowzy Frame of Spirit in the Worſhip of GOD; which we are ſometimes too apt to be overtaken with, but which if allowed and indulged will be of the moſt dangerous Conſequence: for it robs us at once of all the Benefit and Pleaſure of religious Duties, and muſt needs be very offenſive to that GOD whom we pretend to worſhip. For how can we worſhip him with the Heart, whilſt that Heart is aſleep? Take the matter right, and conſider it ſeriouſly: and it will appear that a ruder Affront can ſcarce be offered to the Divine Majeſty, than to indulge to a ſleepy, ſtupid frame in his Worſhip, when he requires you to *ſerve him with a perfect Heart*; that is, to ſtir up all your Powers to wait upon him, and to engage the whole Attention of your Soul in his Service; in order to experience thoſe holy Affections, Impreſſions and Convictions, without which the Worſhip of GOD will become joyleſs and unprofitable.

Thus then you ſee what it is to ſerve GOD with a *perfect Heart*, *viz.* with an *upright*, *pure*, and *engaged* Heart. But

2. There

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2. There is a further Direction in the words relating to the Manner wherein we are to ſerve GOD, and that is, not only with a *perfect Heart* but with a *willing Mind.* This implies

1. That we ſhould always preſerve an habitual Readineſs and Diſpoſition to the Service of GOD, and oppoſe and break through every accidental Reluctance of the Mind thereunto. I doubt it is a matter of too frequent Experience that when the Seaſons of Duty return you find yourſelves diſinclined and indiſpoſed to it, and apt to frame and take up with very ſlight Excuſes to neglect it. The carnal Heart will ſuggeſt a thouſand Pleas of [illegible]eſs for it, ariſing from the Temper o[illegible] or Body: 'that 'to neglect it once is no ſuch great matter; 'GOD forbid that you ſhould turn your 'back upon the publick, or private Exerciſes 'of Worſhip. No, when you are in a bet-'ter Frame you will attend them. But to 'go about a Duty when the Heart is ſo in-'diſpoſed you fear the Service will be all 'formal, ſpiritleſs, and unacceptable; mere '*Bodily exerciſe* which *profiteth little:* and

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'therefore it had better at this time be omitted."

Such are the Pleas which the deceitful Heart often urges to evade the Obligations to a plain important Duty; and indeed it is one of the moſt common Inſtances of it's Deceitfulneſs. But whatever you may think, if you comply with ſuch kind of Suggeſtions the certain Conſequence will be—— your Heart will the next time be more indiſpoſed; every ſuch carnal Plea will be ſtronger, aud you more inclined to hearken to it: which will firſt create an Indifference to Duty, and then by inſenſible degrees lead you to a cuſtomary Neglect of it, eſpecially to a Neglect of private Duties, becauſe that may more [illegible] concealed from the Eye of the World. And the Effect of a cuſtomary Neglect of private Duties will be a woful Eſtrangement between GOD and your Soul, a Diſreliſh of Divine Ordinances, and a total Inability to engage the Heart therein.

Of ſuch Importance is it to oppoſe with all our might ſuch criminal Indiſpoſitions to the Service of GOD. And let all thoſe carnal Pleas be immediately ſilenced and ſup-

ſuppreſſed with this Thought.—— 'It is 'the great GOD who made me that calls me 'now by his Providence to worſhip him; 'and his Authority I dare not diſpute. It 'is a plain and neceſſary Duty, and what 'I cannot neglect without a Wound to my 'Conſcience: How then can I yield to 'this wicked ſuggeſtion of the Devil and 'my own Heart, and preſumptuouſly ſin 'againſt GOD? In his Name and Strength 'then let me prepare my ſelf to meet the 'LORD and to ſerve him in the beſt man-'ner I am able.'

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Try the Experiment the very next time you are beſet with a ſinful Indiſpoſition to any Act of Worſhip, and you will find that your Incapacity is not ſo great as you imagined, and that you are enabled by the Grace of GOD to go through the Duty in a much better manner than you feared. And when a Diſpoſition to the Service of GOD becomes habitual, theſe *occaſional* Indiſpoſitions will be leſs frequent: and to watch againſt and conſtantly oppoſe *theſe* is the beſt way to attain *that*; and is the leaſt that we can ſuppoſe to be implied in the Precept to ſerve GOD with a *willing Mind*.

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2. This Precept in the Text further implies that our Minds ſhould be excited to the Service of GOD from a principle of Gratitude and Love. There are two principles from whence all acceptable Worſhip flows; and they are Fear and Love.—We are often commanded to *ſerve the* LORD *with Fear*; becauſe he is a great and jealous GOD; jealous of the honour of his Name and Worſhip; before whom the Angels bow and the Devils tremble; let no Earth-born Mortal then dare to come raſhly into his Preſence, or behave irreverently there; leſt by a bold profanation of what GOD himſelf hath made and pronounced ſacred he incurr the Puniſhment of *Uzzah* and find his Preſumption fatal.

But leſt his *Excellency ſhould make us afraid and his Dread fall upon us*, ſo as to intimidate and diſcourage us from approaching his ſacred Preſence, he is pleaſed to repreſent himſelf as a Being of boundleſs Benignity and Goodneſs, as our Benefactor, Friend and Father, to attract our Love and engage our Souls in his Service: and till a principle of Gratitude and Love to GOD take full Poſſeſſion of our Heart we ſhall never

never ſerve him with a *willing Mind.* Unleſs we love GOD we cannot delight in him, and till we delight in him we ſhall never delight in his Service; but have a ſecret Diſinclination to thoſe devout Employments, wherein pious Souls find their chief Joy. SERM. VII.

And to worſhip GOD with that Love and Gratitude which is implied in ſerving him with a *willing Mind*, the following brief Conſiderations are very proper to excite us.

In laying us under theſe Religious Obligations GOD intends our higheſt Advantage: and requires our Obſervance of them as the fitteſt Expedients to form us to that Spirituality, Purity and inward Acquaintance with him which are neceſſary to our future and final Happineſs. It is out of Love to us that he hath obliged us to obſerve the ſacred Inſtitutions of his Worſhip; out of Love to him then ſhould we attend them.

It is Love that intently engages the Heart in Divine Worſhip: and in proportion to the intent Engagement of the Heart, will be our Delight therein. This I believe is agreeable to the Experience of every pious Soul that is obſervant of its ſpiritual State

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and Temper: and assigns the Reason why at other times Religious Duties are so insipid, if not burdensome; *viz.* because the Heart is not engaged, the Mind finds no Employment, at least not enough to give it that Pleasure it always feels when Love animates the Devotion.

Again, let us consider how much GOD hath done for us: and say to ourselves when we are about to enter upon any particular act of Divine Service— 'I have now a 'fair Opportunity of testifying my Grati-'tude to GOD for his unspeakable Good-'ness to me; and of shewing the Sincerity 'of my Heart, which so often upon the 'Receit of new Mercies cries out, LORD, '*what shall I render?* Let me now render 'unto the LORD part of that *Tribute of 'Praise, which* I have so often said, *is due 'unto his Name:* now ease my full Heart 'by acknowledging that Debt of Gratitude 'which my Eternal Praises will never dis-'charge. And if this warm and devout 'Engagement of the Heart may cost me 'some Pains (as possibly it may) can I 'think it too much for him who hath done 'so much for me? will not this be a still

'greater

'greater Teſtimony of my Sincerity; and 'be abundantly over-paid by the ſacred 'Satisfaction that enſues?'— SERM. VII.

To all which we may add that his kind and merciful Condeſcention to our Infirmities, and the gracious Means he hath uſed to encourage our Approaches to him, ſhould excite us to the moſt grateful and willing Worſhip; for he hath given us his Word as the moſt plain and perfect Rule of Worſhip, hath ſent his Spirit to help our Infirmities, and appointed his Son to be our Mediator to preſent our Services before him with Acceptance.

Such Conſiderations have a plain tendency to inſpire our Souls with Love and Gratitude to the great Object of our Worſhip, and engage us to ſerve him with a *willing Mind.*

3. To ſerve GOD with a *willing Mind* implies a Chearfulneſs of Heart in Worſhip. This indeed is but the Conſequence of what I have juſt been mentioning; for if Love and Gratitude poſſeſs the Heart they will inſpire it with Joy and Chearfulneſs. However, it deſerves a diſtinct Conſideration. To worſhip GOD with a dejected Air and

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diſconſolate Heart is no leſs diſhonourable to him, than diſagreeable to our ſelves. It looks as if we thought him a hard Maſter and his Service a Burden and Drudgery. He does not love to ſee us come to him, as Slaves to a Tyrant, with Trembling and Terrour. No, thus to approach him is a Sign we do not know him, that we have received wrong Impreſſions of him; and it gives a very injurious Miſrepreſentation of him and his ways to others. He requires us to ſerve him with *Gladneſs*, to come into his Preſence with Thankſgiving; for his Service is perfect Freedom, his Ways are *Pleaſantneſs and Peace*, and *in keeping his Commandments there is great* preſent *Reward*, as well as a future inconceivable Recompence.

Thus then are we to ſerve GOD, not only with a *perfect Heart* but with a *willing Mind*: that is, we ſhould ever preſerve a ready Diſpoſition to his Service, be induced to it from a principle of Love, and engage in it with Chearfulneſs and Delight.

And having thus conſidered the general Rule of Divine Worſhip laid down in the Text, I am now

2. To

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2. To conſider that which is eſſential and peculiar to the Chriſtian Worſhip, *viz.* that it be always performed *in the name of* CHRIST.

The general Rule under the Goſpel Diſpenſation is, *do all things in the name of the Lord Jeſus, (f).* And this is what our Saviour frequently inculcated upon his firſt Diſciples before he left them, as a Rule of Worſhip to which they ought to have a ſpecial regard. *At that Day* (ſais he) *ſhall ye aſk in my Name. Verily, verily I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have aſked nothing in my Name: aſk, and ye ſhall receive that your Joy may be full (g).* Again, *whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my Name, I will do it (h).*

Theſe Paſſages indeed only refer to one part of Worſhip, *viz.* that of Prayer, but that all other parts of Religious Service are to be performed in the Name of CHRIST appears, not only from the forementioned general Rule, *do all things in the Name of the Lord*

(*f*) Col. iii. 17. (*g*) John xvi. 23, 24, 26. (*h*) John xiv. 13, 14.

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*Lord Jeſus*, but from thoſe Words of his John xiv. 6. *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by me.*

Now, to ſerve GOD in the Name of CHRIST implies

1. A Dependance on his Mediation for the Acceptance of our Services. Our beſt Services are very defective in the eyes of GOD, however they may appear in our own. And even we ourſelves cannot but be ſenſible that there is ſo much Formality, Diſtraction, Deadneſs, and Indevotion in ſome of our moſt ſolemn acts of Worſhip, as renders them very unworthy of the Divine Regard. How ſeldom is it that we ſerve GOD with that *upright*, *pure*, and *engaged* Heart, with that *ready*, *grateful*, *fervent* Frame of Spirit which he requires? what Reaſon have we to fear leaſt he ſhould reject our Services on account of thoſe ſinful Imperfections that attend them; that the defective Manner of our Worſhip will defeat its End; and that he will abhor the Sacrifice that is offered to him from ſuch impure Hands, and on ſo polluted an Altar? How gracious then is this Conſtitution

of

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of the Goſpel; that to encourage our Approaches unto GOD under all our Infirmities, he hath appointed his own Son to be our Mediator! to aſſure us that if we offer up our Services in a humble Dependance on his Merits and Interceſſion, the diſallowed Imperfections of them ſhall not prevent their Acceptance: but that GOD for his ſake will mercifully pardon the one and reward the other.

But then theſe Services muſt be ſincere, and thoſe Imperfections unallowed; otherwiſe, in vain do we truſt in CHRIST to recommend them to the Divine Acceptance: for no Hypocrites can have an Intereſt in him, how much ſo ever they may profeſs Dependance upon him.

2. To ſerve GOD in the Name of *Chriſt* implies a dependance on his Grace for our Aſſiſtance. He told his Diſciples expreſsly that *without him they could do nothing*, John xv. 5. that is, without Grace or Spiritual Strength derived from him, they would be as unfruitful as a Branch ſevered from the Tree, and deprived of its Nouriſhment from the Root. It was to this Source the Apoſtle *Paul* aſcribed all his ſpiritual Strength

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Strength and Attainments. *I can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

3. To ſerve GOD in the Name of Chriſt implies a Dependance on his Merits for the Atonement of our Guilt: that is, not only for the pardon of the Sins of our *holy things*, but of thoſe of our whole Lives: agreeably to another peculiar Conſtitution of the Goſpel, *that we are juſtified freely by Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt; whom* GOD *hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteouſneſs* (or his Mercy) *for the Remiſſion of Sins* (*i*), that is, if we ſincerely repent and obey the Goſpel, and depend on the merits of Chriſt for our Salvation, GOD will graciouſly pardon our Sins for the ſake of what his Son hath done and ſuffered for their Attonement *.

4. To

(*i*) Rom. iii. 24, 25.

* An important Doctrine of Chriſtianity; but too much obſcured and ſublimated by elaborate Subtilties, exquiſite Diſtinctions, and exceſſive Refinements: and (I think) is all that can be meant by what ſome affect in more myſtical Language, to call *Juſtification by the imputed Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, received by the hand of Faith.*

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4. To worſhip GOD in the Name of Chriſt implies a thankful Acknowledgment of this gracious Conſtitution of his, in appointing his Son to be Mediator between him and his apoſtate Creatures. A Conſtitution as full of Mercy as it is of Wiſdom; which we ſhould ever think of with the higheſt Gratitude, entirely diſclaiming all Mediators in the Worſhip of GOD but the Son of GOD, and all Dependance but on his Merits and Atonement.

Thus have I gone through what I propoſed on this Part of the Subject, viz. *in what manner* GOD *is to be acceptably ſerved.* To which I ſhall only add, that as the Service of GOD comprehends the Duties of Virtue as well as of Piety, *thoſe* are to be performed in the ſame manner as *theſe, viz. with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind, and in the name of the Lord Jeſus.*

I have now particularly conſidered the ſeveral parts of that important Advice which *David* gives to his Son *Solomon* in the former Part of the Text; the Motives by which he urges this Advice upon him, contained in the latter part of the Verſe, muſt be

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be reſerved for another Subject. In the mean time I ſhall endeavour to improve what hath been ſaid by two or three practical Reflections. And

1. Does the Word of GOD itſelf ſo expreſsly inform us in what Manner he is to be acceptably worſhipped, then how vain a thing is it to lay a great Streſs upon any particular Place, or external Forms, and Modes of Worſhip! Theſe Circumſtances have no Importance under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation. They had under the Jewiſh, but it ceaſed with it. And now men *are required in every place to pray, lifting up holy Hands unto the Lord (k)*, that is, He now no longer looks at the Sacredneſs of the Place where our Prayers are offered, but the Holineſs of the Heart from whence they proceed: and every one that *fears* GOD *and works Righteouſneſs*, that ſerves him *in Spirit and Truth*, and according to the Directions of his own Word, is *accepted of him*. This is all that GOD requires of us, and all that we need concern ourſelves about with regard to the Manner of his Worſhip. However

(k) 1 Tim. ii. 8.

ever as there are different Opinions among good Chriſtians concerning this matter, let us all keep to the Apoſtolic Rules for our Direction in ſuch Caſes, *viz.* to take Care how we judge or *deſpiſe* one another *(l)*; *let every Man be fully perſuaded in his own Mind (m)*; *have his Perſuaſion to himſelf before* GOD *(n)*; *and happy is he that condemneth not himſelf in that thing which he alloweth (o)*. SERM. VII.

2. What hath been ſaid ſhould put us upon enquiring in what Manner our Worſhip hath been performed, and what hath been the ordinary Frame of our Mind therein. Whether we have ſerved GOD with that *Integrity*, *Purity* and *Engagement* of Heart, that *Readineſs*, *Gratitude* and *Chearfulneſs* of Spirit, which his Word preſcribes; or whether we have contented our ſelves with a mere formal, heavy, lifeleſs performance of Religious Duties.—Let us charge it home upon our Conſciences to anſwer this important Queſtion with the utmoſt Impartiality and Truth. For if the latter hath been our Caſe and our Crime, in

*(l)* Rom. xiv. 3. *(m)* Rom. xiv. 5. *(n)* Rom. xiv. 22. *(o)* Ibid.

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in vain do we turn our Eyes from it. GOD knows it, and obſerves it, whether we attend to it or not. We may conceal it from others, we may conceal it from our ſelves, but we cannot conceal it from him. His Eye looks through the very Soul, and penetrates every Diſguiſe. 'He ſees, O Sinner, with what Reluctance thou comeſt 'into his Houſe, and how thou behaveſt 'there. He hears the Language of thy 'Heart, when it ſecretly ſais, *O, what a 'wearineſs is it!* He ſees the falſe Views, 'the latent Hypocriſy, the vile and corrupt 'Affections, thou indulgeſt in thine Heart, 'and takes notice of every wanton and wandering Thought that paſſes there; and that 'ſtupid Inſenſibility which benumbs thy Spirit, and ſo totally unfits thee for the ſacred 'Work thou art about.'— How provoking, to offer ſuch dead Sacrifices to the Living GOD! and to put off the Searcher of all Hearts with ſuch a heartleſs Worſhip! —— If this hath been our Caſe let us lament it this Evening on our bended Knees before GOD, with all the Humiliation of true Penitents; and importunately beg for his Grace

to

to enable us to ſerve him for the future with a more *perfect Heart and willing Mind.* SERM. VII.

3. Does GOD require us to ſerve him with a perfect Heart, this ſhews us the Need we have to prepare our Hearts to ſerve him; and to avoid every thing which may any way indiſpoſe or unfit us for his Service. Our Profit and Pleaſure in the Service of GOD depend a good deal on the full and free Engagement of the Heart therein; and the Engagement of our Hearts in it depends no leſs on the Care we take to prepare them for it; and to avoid every Occaſion which is apt to diſturb or diſtract our Thoughts in the ſacred Work we are going about. In order to get our Minds then into a ſerious Frame for publick Worſhip, it is neceſſary to ſeaſon them by ſome previous Acts of private Devotion, and pious Reflections on the Nature and Importance of the Divine Inſtitutions, and eſpecially on the awful Majeſty and Preſence of that Eternal Being upon whoſe Worſhip we are about to attend.

4. Hence likewiſe appears the ſame Neceſſity of keeping the Heart with all Diligence *in* the Service of GOD. That *the*

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*Heart is deceitful above all things*, is a Truth of which we ſeldom have a more ſenſible Experience, than when we are engaged in the Worſhip of GOD. If we do not carefully watch it at ſuch a time, it will ſoon admit vain, vagrant, and fooliſh Thoughts, if not worſe; which will not only rob us of the Benefit and Pleaſure of our Religious Duties, but leave a bad Effect upon the Mind when we go from thence.

What remains then, but that we take the Precept in the Text for our future Rule of Worſhip, in all our Approaches to the great GOD, whether in publick or private; and ſee to it that we *ſerve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind*; under the Influence of this awakening Motive, *that the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth the Imaginations of the Thoughts*, which will be the Subject of the next Diſcourſe.

SER-

# SERMON VIII.

God the Searcher of Hearts, and found of them that ſeek him.

1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

*And thou Solomon my Son, know thou the* God *of thy Father, and ſerve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: for the* Lord *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

HAVING particularly conſidered the Exhortation contained in the former part of this Verſe, I proceed now to conſider the Motives by which it is urged in the latter.

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And theſe are three; the *firſt* comprehended in thoſe Words, *for the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts:* and the *other* two in the Words following, *if thou ſeek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forſake him he will caſt thee off for ever.*

I ſhall ſpeak to each of theſe diſtinctly.

I. The firſt Motive whereby *David* urges the preceding Advice he had given to his Son is this, *for the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.*

Theſe words ſeem to have a particular reference to the latter Branch of the Exhortation, *to ſerve* GOD *with a perfect Heart, and a willing Mind:* with a perfect Heart, becauſe *the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts*; and with a willing Mind, becauſe *he underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.*

Three things I would briefly premiſe for the Illuſtration of the Words

1. Though the Word which is here rendered *ſearcheth* (*a*), when applied to Man, commonly ſignifies to *examine* or *make a diligent Inquiſition* in order to come at a certain

(*a*) דָּרַשׁ

tain Knowledge of the Truth, yet when applied to GOD, it ſignifies abſolute immediate Knowledge, without any ſuch previous Inquiry. So that when GOD is ſaid to *ſearch* the Heart, the Meaning is he *perfectly underſtands* it. And thus it is explained in the Words following, *the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts, and* UNDERSTANDETH *all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.* In the ſame Senſe is the Word uſed and explained, Pſal. cxxxix. 23. *Search me, O* GOD, *and know my Heart, Try me and know my Thoughts.*

2. The Knowledge which GOD has of the human Heart is not only moſt perfect but *univerſal. The* LORD *ſearcheth* (or knoweth) *all Hearts.* The divine Eye penetrates every dark Diſguiſe and deep Reſerve which men practiſe to hide their Hearts from others; the ſecret Views of the moſt artful Diſſembler and vailed Hypocrite are as perfectly known to him, as thoſe which are more open and unconcealed, *for the* LORD *ſearcheth* ALL *Hearts.*

3. The *Hearts of Men* and the *Imaginations of the Thoughts* are mentioned here as diſtinct Objects of the Divine Knowledge:

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and the Difference between them ſeems to be this; by the *former* we are to underſtand the Paſſions and Purpoſes of the Mind; and by the *latter*, the Paintings of Fancy, or the mere caſual Rovings of Thought.

But I proceed now

I. Briefly to prove this Propoſition.

II. To ſhew how fitly it is urged as a Motive to the Duty before enjoined.

I. I am briefly to prove this Propoſition; that *the* LORD *ſearcheth*, or knoweth *all Hearts.*

This is very evident from the Reaſon of things; for he made the Heart, and therefore muſt be ſuppoſed to have a perfect Knowledge of his own Workmanſhip; with all its Affections, Operations and Powers. To which Purpoſe we may apply the words of the *Pſalmiſt*, *He that planted the Ear, ſhall he not hear? He that formed the Eye, ſhall he not ſee? He that teacheth men Knowledge, ſhall he not know?* It immediatly follows, *the* LORD *knoweth the Thoughts of Men, that they are Vanity (b).* He that gave to man an underſtanding Heart, muſt underſtand the Heart he gave.

This

(b) Pſal. xciv. 9 —— 11.

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This may be further argued from his Omniſcience. He is the *all-ſeeing* GOD: *his Underſtanding is infinite:* and therefore the human Heart under all its Diſguiſes and Covers cannot be hid from him.

But that which puts this Matter beyond all Doubt is, that GOD's perfect Knowledge of the Hearts of men is frequently and expreſsly aſcribed to him in the ſacred Scriptures, as an Attribute peculiarly Divine. He claims this to himſelf as his ſole Prerogative, in that well-known Paſſage, *Jer.* xvii. 9, 10. Where, after we are told that *the Heart is deceitful above all things*, ſo that it is not poſſible for Man to know it; it immediately follows, *I the* LORD *ſearch the Heart, I try the Reins, even to give to every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* So when the Prophet prayed to GOD to vindicate his righteous Cauſe, he appeals to him under this Character, *O* LORD *of Hoſts, that tryeſt the Righteous, that ſeeſt the Reins and the Heart* (*c*). And when the Apoſtles were met together in Council to fill up the Vacancy occaſioned by the Death of *Judas*, and to chuſe another



(*c*) Jer. xx. 12.

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another Apoſtle in his room; upon this important Occaſion, I ſay, they addreſſed the LORD in this Manner, *Thou* LORD *who knoweſt the Hearts of all men, ſhew whether of theſe two thou haſt choſen (d)* they ſeemed fearful leſt, through their Ignorance of the Hearts of Men, they might poſſibly chuſe another Hypocrite, as *Judas* was; and therefore they refer it wholly to GOD, and apply to him under this Character (καρδιογνωστα) O Thou, *heart-knowing* GOD! But this Point is too plain to need a laboured Demonſtration.

II. I am now to ſhew how fitly this Conſideration is urged to enforce the Duty enjoined; or how proper it is to induce us to guard and govern our Thoughts at all times, eſpecially in the Service of GOD.

This is a Duty of no ſmall Difficulty, eſpecially at ſome times; but of equal Importance to the Peace and Purity of the Mind.

Thoughts, we generally ſay, are free. By which we mean no more than that they are free from the Cognizance of human Laws. But it is the peculiar Property of the Divine Laws

(d) Acts i. 24.

Laws that they reach the Heart, bind the Thoughts, extend to the moſt ſecret Deſires of the Mind; and hence it is we are told that the very *Thought of Fooliſhneſs is Sin* (*e*), becauſe it is a Violation of the Divine Law which forbids the Indulgence of all ſinful Thoughts. SERM. VIII.

And this Conſideration that *the* LORD *ſearcheth all Hearts*, is a very proper Motive to keep them with Diligence at all times eſpecially in his Worſhip, becauſe

1. A total Neglect of our Thoughts and the Frame of our Spirits in the Service of GOD ſhews a great Contempt of his Authority. Common Decency requires, that when we come into the Preſence of our Superior, we ſhould take heed to our Dreſs and Manner; that there be nothing in either of them that is offenſive or diſreſpectful. And are not our Hearts as well known to GOD as our Actions are to Man? Are not ſinful Thoughts as great an Affront to him, as ſordid Attire is to them? How dare we bring our Hearts into the Preſence of the GOD of Heaven, in an *Undreſs*? This is a common Simile, but it is a juſt one.

(*e*) Prov. xxiv. 9.

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one. And why has it no more Effect? Why ſhould Men allow themſelves in one caſe to do that, which in a parallel caſe they are convinced is the utmoſt Indecency? a plain Inſtance that they are more ambitious to acquire the Eſteem of Men than that of their Maker; are more afraid of offending their Fellow-creature than of affronting their Creator. If we take no Care of our Hearts in the Preſence of GOD, it is a plain Demonſtration that this is our caſe: we muſt be ſenſible of it. But what is ſtrange is, that we ſhould be ſenſible, yet not aſhamed of it! that we ſhould admit the Conviction without the Remorſe!

2. GOD who knows our Thoughts now, will call us to an Account for them hereafter. As they are not free, ſo neither are they forgot; but are all upon Record in the Book of GOD to be brought into Account another Day. With this ſerious Sentiment the Royal Preacher concludes his Sermon, *for* GOD *ſhall bring every Work into Judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* (*f*), which is confirmed by our Saviour's Words, *nothing is*

(*f*) Eccleſ. xii. 14.

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*is ſecret that ſhall not be made manifeſt; neither any thing hid, that ſhall not be known* (g); and by thoſe of the Apoſtle, *when* GOD *ſhall judge the Secrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my Goſpel* (h).

3. It is the Turn and Temper of the Heart which forms the Character of every one in the Sight of GOD. In the Eye of the World, every Man is according to the Nature and Tendency of his accuſtomed Courſe of Actions; in the Eye of GOD, every Man is according to the Prevalence and Tendency of his allowed Thoughts and Affections. Men judge of us by our Conduct; for they have no other Rule to judge by. But GOD judges of us by our Hearts. Hence it is, that ſometimes they who are *highly eſteemed among Men are an Abomination in the Sight of* GOD: becauſe the Searcher of Hearts *ſees their inward Part to be very Wickedneſs* (i).

*Laſtly*, If from this Conſideration, that GOD *knows our Hearts*, we are induced to keep a ſtrict and conſtant Guard over them at all times, and eſpecially in his Worſhip, it will be the beſt Evidence we can have of

(g) Luke viii. 17. (h) Rom. ii. 16. (i) Pſal. v. 9.

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of our Sincerity. It is a Sign we desire to stand fair in the Eye of GOD. Sometimes the greatest Temptation to a Sin is an Opportunity of committing it with Secrecy. The wandering and wantonness of our Thoughts are known only to GOD and our selves, and may be indulged without any Injury to our Character and Reputation among Men: if then we keep them under strict Discipline purely out of regard to GOD, *who sees in secret*, it is a Sign that *the Fear of* GOD *is before our Eyes*, and *that our Hearts are right before him*. When a Man makes Conscience of committing a Fraud, when he has an Opportunity of doing it without the least Danger of being detected, we say he is an *honest Man*; and one who dares not offend GOD in his Thoughts which are all hid from the World, has an equal Title to the Character of an *upright Man*.

This Thought then that *the* LORD *searcheth all Hearts*, together with the forementioned Considerations so proper to enforce it, let us remember always to carry with us into the Worship of GOD; and we shall find it a very seasonable Motive (the Help of which we too often want) to excite us

to

to take heed to our Views and Ends in coming to it and to our Hearts and Thoughts when we are engaged in it. SERM. VIII.

The other two Motives to attend to the Exhortation before given are contained in the latter Part of the Verſe——*if thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

Theſe Words contain the moſt valuable Promiſe and the moſt awful Threatening that are to be found in the whole Book of GOD. The one to excite our Hopes, the other to awaken our Fears: by the one we are tenderly invited to comply with the foregoing Counſel, by the other we are warned to neglect it at our Peril: the one deſigned to win upon mild and ingenuous Minds, the other to rouſe and alarm the thoughtleſs and obſtinate, for He who is perfectly acquainted with the Make of every human Soul, knows how to apply to each of them in a manner ſuitable to its native Diſpoſition and Temper. I ſhall conſider them both diſtinctly. Therefore

II. The next Motive in the Text is a moſt gracious and ample Promiſe, contain-

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ed in those Words, *if thou seek him he will be found of thee.*

*To seek the* LORD, is a Phrase which in common Language is usually applied to the great Duty of *Prayer*; which is the very Life of all practical Religion: for it is the Breath of Prayer that fans the fire of Divine Love in the Heart, and keeps it burning there: yet in the sacred Language it is often put to denote the whole of practical Religion. In this Sense it is used *Psal.* xxxiv. 10. *They that seek the* LORD *shall not want any good thing. Isai.* lv. 6. *seek ye the* LORD *while he may be found*; that is, return unto him while his Favour may be had, for so are the words explained *Isai* ix. 13. *for the people turneth not unto him that smileth on them, neither do they seek the* LORD *of Hosts.* Where the Phrase is put to denote Repentance as well as Prayer, *i. e.* returning to GOD as our Portion, our Happiness and our All. If we do so, he will return unto us; *if we seek him, he will be found of us.*

He is once indeed said *to be found of them that sought him not (k).* But that passage referred to the free and gracious Call of the Gentiles

(k) Isai vi. 5.

Gentiles into the Goſpel-Church, a Privi- SERM. VIII.
ledge which they neither expected nor ſought for: and is ſo applied by the Apoſtle *Paul* (*l*); and therefore hath no reference to the preſent Caſe.

What I am further to do then is, to open to you this gracious Promiſe, and to urge and enforce it as I proceed, as the moſt powerful Motive to induce every ingenuous Mind to comply with the foregoing Advice, *to know* GOD *and ſerve him, and to ſeek him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind.* Becauſe, if we ſo do, *he will be found of us.* That is,

1. If we ſeek his *Favour* we ſhall obtain it: *viz.* if we ſeek it in the Manner before deſcribed; *with a perfect Heart, and a willing Mind,* and in the Name of Chriſt.

And this is more than can be ſaid with regard to many of our Fellow-creatures, who are ſo difficult of Acceſs and ſo hard to be pleaſed, that their Favour is not to be obtained, but at a Price which a wiſe Man would not always chuſe to give for it. It is a much eaſier thing to pleaſe GOD than ſome Men. There is no ſuch thing as pleaſing

(*l*) Rom. x. 20,

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ing *theſe* ſometimes without the moſt ſervile Compliance with their Caprice, a Conformity to their Manners, and a Connivance at their Follies, and this the Price of that Favour which after all is not worth the keeping. But the Favour of GOD is to be obtained on much more eaſy and honourable Terms, only by a Compliance with what is in itſelf moſt fit and reaſonable; and if we ſincerely deſire and endeavour to pleaſe GOD, we certainly ſhall.

And now is not the Favour of GOD worth ſeeking? worth ſacrificing every thing for? even the Favour of our deareſt Friend on Earth, when it ſtands in Competition with the Favour of our Almighty Friend in Heaven, for is it not the Foundation and Spring of all our Joy? and comprehenſive of every degree of Felicity! *In his Favour is Life.* ——What ſhould we live for, but this? What but this is worth living for? What can arm us againſt the Fears of Death but this? And what but this is worth dying for? To the very utmoſt Extent and Duration of our Exiſtence his Favour will be the Fountain of our Happineſs, the ſovereign Bliſs of our Immortal Souls. And

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is it not an unſpeakable Satisfaction to be aſ- SERM. ſured from his own Mouth, that *if we ſeek* VIII. *his Favour we ſhall find it?* It is only to abſtain from thoſe things which he forbids and hates, and do thoſe things which he commands and loves; that is, *to ſerve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind*, and he hath given us all poſſible Aſſurance that through *Jeſus Chriſt* he will overlook our unwilling Infirmities, and help us by his Grace to ſerve him better.——In a word, if we give him our Hearts he will deny us nothing: if we deny him our Hearts, he will give us nothing: nothing in a way of Covenant Love and Favour: nothing but what he gives in common to the worſt of Men.

Nay, his Favour is not only eaſily obtained but freely offered; and he condeſcends (O amazing Grace! that the great GOD ſhould condeſcend) to intreat his Rebel Creatures to be reconciled to him! to accept his offered Pardon and Favour! nor can any Sinners accept it more freely than he offers it; or be ſo willing to be ſaved as he is to ſave them. But this Salvation muſt be deſired before it be obtained; his Favour muſt be *ſought* before it be *found*; ſought by earneſt Prayers and ſincere En-

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deavours; and be the chief Object of our Deſire and Purſuit through Life, for our Saviour tells us we muſt not only *ſeek* but *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtreight Gate (m)*.

2. If we ſeek his *Help* we ſhall have it. Whatever Difficulty or Diſtreſs we may be under, we ſhall find him an all-ſufficient, ever-preſent, never-failing Friend. To call upon GOD in a time of Trouble is natural; is what wicked Men may do, and often have done: they who forget GOD in their Proſperity, will nevertheleſs ſeek to him in Adverſity. Thus did that ſtiff-necked People, the Jews; *in their Affliction* (ſais GOD) *they will ſeek me early (n). They have turned their Back unto me, and not their Face; but in the time of their Trouble they will ſay, ariſe and ſave us (o)*. So *Manaſſeh* when he was *taken among the Thorns, bound in Fetters, and in Affliction, he ſought the* Lord *his* GOD *and humbled himſelf greatly before the* GOD *of his Fathers (p)*. Terrible Diſtreſs will extort a Prayer from the moſt wicked Heart. But what Effect ſuch forced, unwilling Prayers will

(m) Luke xiii. 24. (n) Hoſ. v. 15. (o) Jerem. ii. 27. (p) 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12.

will have, we are told in that awful Paſ- SERM. VIII.
ſage of Scripture, Prov. i. 27—29.—— *when Diſtreſs and Anguiſh cometh upon you: then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but ſhall not find me: for that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuſe the Fear of the* LORD.

But not ſo the Righteous. They who have with *a perfect Heart* ſerved the LORD in their Proſperity, may with Confidence of Hope ſeek to him in Adverſity; not only as one who is *able*, but as one who, they know, is *willing* to relieve them: in ſure Expectation of finding *Grace to help in time of Need*; all ſuitable, ſeaſonable, and ſufficient Help. Perhaps not exactly in that Way, or preciſely at that Time which they deſire; but in ſome other Way, or at ſome other Time which he knows will be more for their Advantage.

And what a mighty Priviledge is this! to have an all-wiſe and all-ſufficient Friend ever at hand, to comfort us under all the Sorrows, and ſupport us under all the Burdens of Life! And ſuch a Friend is GOD to them that ſerve him *with a perfect Heart*:

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a Friend always willing to indulge our Importunities; and who will never turn away our humble Addreſſes either as impertinent or unſeaſonable: a Friend ever at Hand *and never afar off*, as our Earthly Friends often are; who are frequently abſent when we ſtand moſt in Need of their Help: an Almighty Friend whoſe Arm can reach to the very Bottom of our Diſtreſs, and extend to us the moſt ſpeedy and effectual Relief, when our deareſt Friends on Earth are only weeping becauſe they cannot. When they prove *miſerable Comforters all*, and the Conſolations they kindly intend do but aggravate our Grief, O what Eaſe, what ſweet Relief in that Thought! 'I have ſtill one 'Friend more left; and He, I am ſure is 'all-ſufficient. *I will therefore ſeek unto* 'GOD, *and unto* GOD *will I commit my* 'Cauſe.'

3. If we ſeek his *Direction* we ſhall receive it. Under any of thoſe Difficulties or Embaraſments of Life, when Circumſtances are ſo adverſe or involved that we know not which Way to turn, or what Courſe to take, what a Comfort is it that we

we have GOD for our Infallible Guide and Counſellour! If we *lack Wiſdom*, we are directed to *aſk it of him (q)*, for *the* LORD *giveth Wiſdom (r)*. Seaſonable and juſt therefore is the Advice of *Solomon*, *truſt in the* LORD *with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine own Underſtanding; in all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy Paths (s)*; or inſtruct us in the Way that we ſhould go; and that as clearly as if we heard a Voice behind us ſaying, '*this is the 'Way walk you in it,' when we are turning either to the right Hand, or to the left.* And what can be a greater Happineſs than to have ſo ſure a Guide always at Hand to conduct us through ſuch dark and dangerous Paths?

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*Laſtly*, If we ſeek his *Holy Spirit*, he will give it us. *If* (ſaith our Saviour) *ye, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more ſhall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that aſk him (t)*; So it is in *Matthew*;



(q) Jam. i. 5. (r) Prov. ii. 6. (s) Prov. iii. 5, 6. (t) Matt. vii. 11.

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but in *Luke* it is, *how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give* THE HOLY SPIRIT *to them that aſk him (u)?* implying that his *Holy Spirit* is comprehenſive of all the good things we can deſire.

By the *Holy Spirit* we are to underſtand the holy Influences and Graces of the Divine Spirit. Theſe are repreſented under various Views and Operations in the Word of GOD. For Inſtance, there are his *renewing* Influences to convert the Soul, his *ſanctifying* Influences to confirm it, and his *ſupporting* Influences to comfort it: and with regard to this laſt he was eſpecially promiſed by our Saviour under the character of *the Comforter*. And beſide theſe, there is his *preventing* Grace, to guard us from Sin; his *quickening* Grace, to excite us to Duty; and his *aſſiſting* Grace, to ſtrengthen us in it. He is moreover repreſented as our *Guide*, to lead us in the Way of Wiſdom and Duty; as our *Teacher*, to inſtruct us in the Knowledge of GOD and Divine Truths; and in fine, as our *Earneſt* of the Heavenly Inheritance: whoever reads the ſacred

(u) Luke xi. 13.

ſacred Scriptures with Attention will ſoon obſerve that theſe are all repreſented there as the diſtinct Operations of GOD's Holy Spirit on the Minds of good Men, whereby he is forming them for the future State of Bliſs, and conducting them to it. SERM. VIII.

And now what can be a greater Bleſſing than to have this Holy Spirit communicating theſe gracious Influences to the Soul, and thus by gradual Advances improving it to a Perfection of *Glory and Virtue!* And this, as comprehenſive of every other good and perfect Gift, GOD will freely beſtow upon every one who ſincerely ſeeks it.

Thus then, *if we ſeek him he will be found of us.*——If we ſeek his Favour, we ſhall obtain it; if we ſeek his Help, we ſhall have it; if we ſeek his Direction, we ſhall receive it; and if we ſeek his Spirit, he will give it.——How great an Encouragement is this *to ſerve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind!* than which there cannot be a more powerful Motive to operate on our *Hopes.*——There is another of a contrary Nature, the moſt ſolemn that can be urged, and equally proper to work

SERM. VIII. upon our *Fears*; contained in the laſt Words of the Verſe—*but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*——But the Conſideration of this, as the Concluſion of this fruitful and important Subject, I ſhall reſerve for the next Diſcourſe.

SER-

# SERMON IX.

## The Nature, Cauſe and Danger of the Sin of Apoſtacy.

1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

*---But if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

THIS is the dreadful Sanction with which the preceding Advice in the Text is enforced. A Commination more full of Terror is not to be found in all the ſacred Scriptures: with the Conſideration of which I ſhall conclude this Subject I have been ſo long upon.

*Solomon* had enjoyed all the Advantages of a liberal and religious Education: But he

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he was a young Man; juſt about to aſcend the Throne, and immerſe in all the Gaiety and Grandeur, the Snares and Temptations of a Royal Life. His wiſe and pious Father ſeemed jealous of him. And therefore having with his dying Breath, as it were, given him the moſt important Precept of Wiſdom, *to know and ſerve* GOD, and urged it with the moſt encouraging Motive, that *if he ſought the* LORD, *he would be found of him*; he enforces it with this ſolemn Thought, *but if thou forſake him he will caſt thee off for ever*.—As if he had ſaid: 'Though the Mercy of GOD is ſo great, that 'he will readily be found of them that ſeek 'him, and you may expect his Bleſſing and 'Favour ſo long as you are faithful to him 'and his Service; yet remember this and 'depend upon it as a moſt certain Truth, 'that, notwithſtanding all his Mercy to 'me, and his gracious promiſe to mine, 'notwithſtanding your diſtinguiſhed Dig-'nity and Relation as the King of *Iſrael* 'and my Son; notwithſtanding all this, I 'ſay, if thou turn thy back upon Religion 'and apoſtatize from his Service, thou art 'ſurely undone both for this World and the 'other:

'other: *if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee* SERM.
'*off for ever.*' IX.

And we have Reaſon to believe that this ſeaſonable Advice of the aged Father, urged in ſo ſolemn a manner, had a due Effect upon the Mind of the Son; at leaſt for ſome time: for the Beginning of his Reign was great and glorious; renowned for many famous Acts of publick Service; eſpecially that great and extraordinary one, his *building a Houſe unto the* LORD, which was a peculiar Honour reſerved for him. He abounded no leſs in Wiſdom than in Wealth; was the richeſt of all the Kings in the Eaſt; and which is ſtill more, his Heart was as open as his Hands were full; and his Inclination to do great and good things, equal to his Ability: and above all things elſe in the World, he prized and prayed for a wiſe and underſtanding Heart. And theſe things, I ſay, may be conſidered as the Effects of thoſe Impreſſions which this Counſel of his aged and dying Father ſo ſolemnly enforced, had left upon his tender Mind.

But to come immediately to the Words of the Text, which contain

III. The

III. The third Motive whereby *David* urges the preceding Advice to his Son— *if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

In which Words there are two Things to be diſtinctly conſidered.

I. The Sin againſt which this Threatening is denounced.

II. The Import, and Extent of the Threatening itſelf.

I. Let us conſider the Sin againſt which this Threatening is denounced.

It is called here a *forſaking* of GOD, that is, forſaking the Ways and Service of GOD; or turning the back upon Religion, after a ſpecious and regular Profeſſion of it: ſo that the Sin that is here plainly intended, is *Apoſtacy*.—Under this Head permit me by way of Caution

1. To lay before you the Nature and Aggravations of this Sin.

2. The uſual Ways by which Men are drawn into it.

1. Let us briefly attend to the Nature and Aggravations of the Sin itſelf.

Apoſtacy

Apoſtacy is a total Renunciation of the Principles, the Practice, and Profeſſion, of the true Religion. The Apoſtate deſerts the Banner under which he had liſted as a Soldier, and bears Arms againſt the Prince to whom he had ſworn Allegiance as a Subject: than which a greater Crime cannot be committed in a Civil State, but is always aggravated in Proportion to the Greatneſs and Goodneſs of the Prince againſt whom the Rebellion is raiſed, and the Obligations which the Rebel owed him. Apoſtacy then, as it is *high Treaſon* againſt the King of Heaven, is attended with the greateſt Aggravations of which any Crime is capable: ſome of which are peculiar to itſelf: for Inſtance, SERM. IX.

Other Sins may be committed through the Surprize of a ſudden and violent Temptation, this is a determined and deliberate Act, the reſult of Thought and Choice: and a perverted and abuſed Underſtanding approves that Choice: ſo that the Apoſtate goes aſtray with the full bent of his Will.

And when he is advanced thus far, he will find himſelf ſtrongly diſpoſed to make a Jeſt of Religion, and ridicule all the Appearances

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pearances of ſerious and conſcientious Piety. A regard to Decorum and his own Intereſt may poſſibly reſtrain him from throwing out his profane Raillery in the preſence of ſome Perſons to whom he knows it will be offenſive; yet ſuch is his Averſion to ſtrict Religion, that he cannot help inwardly deſpiſing thoſe who ſubmit to the Obligations of it, as men of weak Minds and low Underſtanding. For himſelf, 'he 'knows better, and ſees further, and muſt 'be excuſed if he deſires to make Uſe of 'his own Eyes, and cares not to have the 'Shackles thrown upon his free-born Soul;' as if all Religion was Superſtition, and the Reſtraints of Reaſon and Conſcience a viler Bondage than that of the moſt vicious Habits. Again,

Another diſtinguiſhing Property and Aggravation of this Sin is, that it always carries in it a ſecret Malignity againſt true Religion; which diſpoſes the Apoſtate not only to deride but perſecute thoſe that adhere to it. It is his Opinion that there is nothing at all in Religion; and therefore he cannot bear to have his Sentiments forever expoſed

poſed by the pious Tempers and virtuous Lives of thoſe who diſcover the Power of it: and this excites a ſecret Malice in his Mind againſt them; which prompts him either to blaſt their Character by ſtudied Scandal and Abuſe, or (if he has Power) to haraſs them out of the World *. SERM. IX.

And

* Theſe two laſt mentioned Properties of Apoſtacy were remarkably exemplified in the character of *Julian* the Apoſtate Emperor; who after he had been educated in the Principles of Chriſtianity, was led to deſert them by the Influence of his Pagan Tutors: and when he came to the Throne did more to deſtroy it then all his perſecuting Predeceſſors; by Means indeed leſs violent, but more effectual; diſcharging all the Artillery of his own Wit, and that of his Philoſophers againſt its Principles, and whole Magazines of abuſive Satire againſt its Partiſans: for the Uſe of *Ridicule* as a *Teſt of Truth* does not ſeem to be an Invention ſo modern as ſome may imagine. And to give Force to this refined method of Perſecution he thought proper to add ſevere Amercements, *negative Penalties*, and *legal Incapacities*, that their weak and impoveriſhed State might render them yet more contemptible, by which Means he thought to ſecure to himſelf two Advantages, which he obſerved were not ſo eaſily gained by more violent Methods, *viz.* that it would effectually prevent any of his Party going over to the Chriſtians, and probably tempt ſome of *them* to come over to him. Such was the Subtilty and Malice of this Imperial Apoſtate; and ſuch his deep-laid Scheme to root Chriſtianity out of the Empire; which was truly in a fair Way to take Effect, had not GOD been pleaſed to blaſt it by the ſudden Death of that wretched Man.

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And indeed it is notorious, that none are more violent againſt Religion than Apoſtates. As for other wicked Men, let them but alone in their Career of Folly and Vice, and they are quiet; they will let you alone in your Purſuit of Religion and Virtue. But not ſo the Apoſtate. He cannot be eaſy till he ſees others as great Enemies to Religion as himſelf, and if he cannot make them ſo, he will never forgive them.

*Laſtly*, Other great and heinous Sins leave ſomething of Remorſe upon the Mind, whereby Sinners are ſometimes ſoftened and reclaimed; but Apoſtacy hardens the Heart, ſears the Conſcience, and renders it almoſt wholly incapable of any ſerious Impreſſions, either from Religion or Reaſon; and as not only their Affections but their Will and Underſtanding are ſtrongly prejudiced and engaged, there is no Handle left by which to lay hold of them to draw them back again to the Paths of Truth and Piety: ſo that their Recovery is repreſented as next to an Impoſſibility, *Heb.* vi. 4, 8. So complex a Sin is Apoſtacy, ſo black its Guilt, and ſo dreadful its Conſequences. And in order to guard againſt it, I am now

2. To

2. To conſider the ordinary Ways by which Men are drawn into it. And SERM. IX.

1. A great Zeal for little things is one remote Cauſe of Apoſtacy. When a Man is convinced that his Zeal has abuſed his Underſtanding, and led him wrong, he is for throwing it all off at once, and apt to degenerate into a total Indifference about all Religion; which leads him to the very Verge of Apoſtacy, not conſidering that it was not his Zeal, but the Object of it, that was wrong. Had it been placed on more ſubſtantial and important things, it had bore the Teſt of the ſtricteſt Reaſon, and made him an excellent and confirmed Chriſtian. If there is nothing in the Shadow of Religion, does it follow that the Subſtance of it is nothing? —— But here lies the Danger of a falſe or miſplaced Zeal; it throws a Miſt over the Eye of the Mind, that it cannot diſcern things in a clear and ſteady Light; and if by ſome Means or other the Zealot happens to ſee that he hath carried things much too far one Way, he imagines that he cannot ſufficiently atone for that Error till he hath carried them as

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much too far the other. So that from this Fickleneſs of the human Mind and the Tendency of a miſguided Zeal, the moſt oppoſite Extremes are not ſo far diſtant from each other as ſome imagine. Hence it is no uncommon thing to ſee the Enthuſiaſt turn Libertine, the Bigot an Infidel, and Superſtition to end in *Apoſtacy*.

2. Another common Source of Apoſtacy is Vanity, or a weak Affectation of ſeeing further and appearing wiſer than other Men. Perſons of this caſt have ſo high an opinion of their own Penetration, that they cannot bear to be upon a Level with others; and rather than think with the Vulgar, they will boldly ſtrike out ſome new Way, that they may diſtinguiſh their Genius by maintaining it; and the more abſurd it appears to common Apprehenſion, the more Triumph it adminiſters to their ſuperior Underſtanding: rather than ſubmit to common Principles, they exalt themſelves above common Senſe; and thus by affecting to appear wiſer they ſhew themſelves to be weaker than other men. But to compleat this Character there muſt not only be much Pride, but a little

Learning

Learning and Vivacity of parts, and no ſmall degree of Impudence. This ridiculous Vanity is ſometimes the cauſe of Apoſtacy; but not ſo often as SERM. IX.

3. Some ſecret predominant Vice or unconquered Luſt which Men care not to part with. If a Man's Religion do not make him averſe to Sin, Sin will make him averſe to Religion. That which is continually checking and controuling the vicious Bent of his mind grows irkſome to him; and he would caſt it off at once, were it not for the reſtraints of Shame and his Reputation; whilſt theſe remain, he is only a ſecret Hypocrite; when they are conquered, he is then an open Apoſtate. And it is commonly one Sin that hath got faſter hold of him than the reſt, that is the fatal cauſe of this Apoſtacy, more particularly

4. An exceſſive Love of the World (whether the Pleaſures, the Profits, or the Preferments of it) is one of the moſt common Temptations to throw aſide all regards to Religion. When Men are in a full and precipitant Career after the things of this World, they have neither Leiſure nor Diſpoſition to mind the Concerns of the other.

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In the order of their vain Purſuits they firſt forget GOD, and then forſake him. *Demas hath forſaken me, having loved this preſent World (a).* A worldly-minded Man whoſe very Heart and Soul cleaves and clings to the Earth he treads upon, exemplifies the Curſe pronounced on the Serpent; *upon thy Belly ſhalt thou go, and Duſt ſhalt thou eat all the days of thy Life.* Can a Man lift that Heart to GOD which is already chained and centered to the Earth? This Vice in its predominance and power is of all others the moſt bewitching and amazing; diſpoſes a man to every act of Villany and Meanneſs, and ripens him for Apoſtacy. Inſtead of looking upon *Godlineſs to be Gain*, he makes Gain his Godlineſs; aye, and his GOD too; pays the Devotion of his Heart to Mammon; and (as Mr. *Norris* obſerves) loves the World, juſt in the ſame manner he is commanded to love GOD, *with all his Heart and Soul and Mind and Might.* This ſingle Vice is daily drawing thouſands into Apoſtacy; whereby they firſt make ſhip-wreck of their Faith and then of their Souls;

(a) 2 Tim. iv. 10.

Souls; without once attending to the ſolemn Warning our Saviour gives them, *what ſhall it profit a man if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?* SERM. IX.

5. A partial Backſliding in Religion when indulged leads to a total Apoſtacy from it. And this partial Backſliding generally begins with light thoughts of Sin, frequent neglects of Duty, or a careleſs irreverent performance of it. When a Man can but once perſuade himſelf that there is no ſuch great Evil or Danger in Sin as ſome people apprehend, that ſome little Exceſſes may now and then be allowed without much Hazard, or ſome Duties of Religion neglected without any great Damage to the Intereſt of the Soul, or that the mere external Act is ſufficient without the Engagement and Devotion of the Heart in Religious Worſhip; I ſay when a Man is once got into this way of thinking and acting, his Religion is ſo weak and wavering that the leaſt impulſe of Temptation, or the very Puff of profane Breath will be enough to overſet it.

6. Another dangerous Inlet to Apoſtacy is Inconſideration or a Thoughtleſſneſs of Futurity.

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turity. Men would not be ſo careleſs how they behaved in this World, if they did but ſeriouſly think how it is like to go with them in another: they would not be ſo indifferent to Religion, if they were more thoughtful of Hereafter: they would take more care how they lived, did they but rightly conſider what it is to die: they would never *forſake* GOD, were they to to know what it is for him *to caſt them off for ever.*

7. Reading infidel and profane Books is another common Road to Apoſtacy. And the more Wit and Humour they contain the more dangerous they are: the Venom is conveyed more imperceptibly. The mind is diſpoſed to excuſe the Profaneneſs of the Thought for the ſake of the Jeſt; and gradually loſes that Horror it ought always to have of every thing that looks like an Inſult upon Religion, in what ever Dreſs it appears. It is like drinking a Draught of Eaſtern Poiſon, which is ſweet in the Mouth, ſlow in its Effects, but fatal in the End. There can be no true Wit in what is profane, and it ſhews great want of Wit to admire what all perſons of true Taſte abhor.

*Laſtly,*

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*Laſtly*, Wicked company is of all others the moſt common and dangerous Snare whereby men are drawn into Irreligion and Apoſtacy. Nothing more contagious than the Breath of a profane man. The World is governed by Examples, the ſtrong Influence they have upon the Mind is unknown; whilſt they gradually and imperceptibly bend it to a Conformity to the Manners and Cuſtoms of thoſe with whom we familiarly converſe, and bad Examples are commonly moſt attractive; and eſpecially when ſet by thoſe whom in other reſpects we much eſteem. Nothing emboldens or countenances a man more in Vice, renders him more incapable of Conviction, or more effectually draws him into *the Paths of the Deſtroyer*. Which ſhould be a Caution to all, eſpecially to *Youth* (on whoſe Ductile minds Examples have generally the greateſt force) to take Care what Friendſhips they contract, and what Companions they chuſe either in a way of Buſineſs or Diverſion.

Having thus particularly conſidered the Sin mentioned in the Text, it is time now

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II. To attend to the Threatening denounced againſt it; *He will caſt thee off for ever.*

Two things of inexpreſſible Terror are contained in this dreadful Denunciation. 1. That all obſtinate and final Apoſtates ſhall hereafter be totally rejected of their Maker. 2. They ſhall never more be received into Favour.

1. That all obſtinate and final Apoſtates ſhall hereafter be totally rejected of their Maker. And how it is poſſible for a creature to conceive, much leſs to expreſs the Miſery of ſuch a State! Fancy wants an Image, and Language Words, to repreſent what is contained in that dreadful Sentence, *depart from me.* It is the Source and Sum of all imaginable Wretchedneſs. For when GOD totally departs from any, he withdraws from them every degree of Help, Comfort, and Hope.

Alas, what is a poor creature when GOD withdraws his *Help* from him! A young Infant expoſed naked to the Inclemency of the Winter

Winter Sky, in a Deſart amidſt ravening Beaſts, is not in ſo forlorn a ſtate. *Wo unto them* (ſaith GOD) *when I depart from them (b).* GOD is our only Help. Nothing can afford us Help but by his Permiſſion and Favour. And when He withdraws it from us, every thing elſe will. And as the Sinner hath no Help in himſelf, he muſt be totally helpleſs, that is, defenceleſs, and wholly expoſed to the very worſt that can befal him. SERM. IX.

Again, they who are totally caſt off by GOD loſe every degree of *Comfort.* GOD is the ſource of all Happineſs, as the Sun is of Light. When he withdraws, every degree of Comfort goes with him; as total Darkneſs enſues from the abſence of the Sun. Every degree or kind of Satisfaction we now enjoy, from whatever Source it immediately ſprings, is the free effect of GOD's Mercy and Favour continued to us: but when his *Mercy is clean gone for ever*, not the leaſt degree of Comfort can then remain. And in fine,

To them who are caſt off by their Maker every degree of *Hope* is loſt. Which cannot

(b) Hoſ. ix. 12.

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not be ſaid of any the moſt miſerable Wretch in this Life; for whilſt there is Life, there is Hope. But in the future ſtate of Miſery there is none: whence enſues a total Deſpair, which is rendered inſupportable by this Thought,

2. That they are thus caſt off *for ever*: that this helpleſs, comfortleſs, hopeleſs State into which they have brought themſelves, will have *no End!* O dreadful Thought! How is it poſſible the moſt reſolute Sinners can withſtand its Force! why does it not throw a Damp on all their carnal Mirth; and *make their Heart ſad in the midſt of Laughter?* The Reaſon is plain. They will not admit it, for it could not fail to have this effect, if they did. If it be true, it is Madneſs not to think of it; and whether it be or no, is a matter that ought to be well examined: becauſe no leſs than the Life of their Immortal Soul is at Stake. One thing is certain; if the Scriptures be the Word of GOD, this everlaſting Puniſhment of Apoſtate and Impenitent Sinners is unavoidable, becauſe it is frequently and plainly threatened there; and the GOD of Truth can never falſify

falſify his Word. So that they have only this one poor chance of *eſcaping the Damnation of Hell*, viz. that the ſacred Scriptures are all a Forgery and Fiction; and the Threatenings and Promiſes they contain, a mere Deluſion. Well, is it not worth while then to go to the Bottom of this matter, and examine thoroughly whether they be ſo or no? But even this they will not do. Becauſe they have ſome ſecret Suſpicions that on a ſober Examination the Truth will turn out contrary to what they would have it, and ſo rather than be terrified from their ſinful Pleaſures and Purſuits, they are determined to think no more of the matter. SERM. IX.

So true is it that Sinners periſh for want of thinking: could we but bring them to their ſenſes, and ſet them in good earneſt on thinking, there were ſome hopes of them. But if they will not ſo much as think of Hereafter, nor conſider the Conſequences of things, nor regard the Threatenings of the Divine Word —— what Hope can we have of ſuch Men? And this was the fatal cauſe of all the Obſtinacy and Infidelity of the Jews——*my People will not conſider.*

I ſhall

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I ſhall now conclude this Diſcourſe with a few Reflections on each Branch of it in particular. And

1. We have been conſidering the nature of Apoſtacy and the various ways whereby men are uſually drawn into it, let this then put us upon our Guard againſt every one of them; and eſpecially againſt that inward Carnality of Mind which is the original Bias to them all: *take heed, Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living* GOD *(c)*.

Let us conſider into which of the forementioned Snares our *evil Heart* is moſt apt to betray us: whether it be an intemperate Zeal, a vain Ambition, a paſſion for the World, or ſome predominant Vice, a neglect of Duty, an averſion to ſerious Thought, or a delight in profane Books and wicked Company: and let us ſet a double Guard upon that Inclination; leſt by that ſingle ſnare we be drawn aſide *into the Paths of the Deſtroyer*.

If by the Grace and Providence of GOD in the Diſpoſition of our Minds and Circumſtances

(c) Heb. iii. 12.

ſtances in Life, we are not ſo much expoſed to any of theſe dangerous Inlets to Apoſtacy as many others are, we have indeed abundant reaſon to be thankful. But let us take care we be not ſecure; leſt ſome unexpected Temptation ſhould deceive our Hearts, and a *deceived Heart ſhould turn us aſide.* Let us never forget that partial Backſlidings are frequently the Beginning of a total Apoſtacy. However ſafe we may think ourſelves, the Deceitfulneſs of Sin and our own Hearts will always make inceſſant Watchfulneſs an indiſpenſable Duty, for they who think they ſtand the ſureſt are often moſt in Danger of falling. SERM. IX.

And as we would guard againſt a partial Backſliding, let us beware of a growing Indiſpoſition to Duty; check the firſt Symptoms of a lukewarm Heart: for the Diſtempers of the Mind (like thoſe of the Body) are beſt ſtopt in their firſt Principle; and if neglected may become incurable.

But above all, let us be moſt ſolicitous for a Divine Guard. And upon the firſt ſenſe of our inadvertent Deviations from the ways of Duty, let us ſtop ſhort, and addreſs our humble

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humble Prayer to Heaven for recovering Grace.—'O my GOD, how have I loſt my 'ſelf by wandering too far from Home, 'without the Guide of thy Word! I have 'been that *Fool who truſteth his own Heart* (*d*); 'and that Heart hath deceived me. How 'could I be ſo incautious after ſo many paſt 'Proofs of its Deceitfulneſs! I have done 'very fooliſhly, and before I thought of 'my Impiety, am got into the high road 'to Apoſtacy. Lord, help me to recal 'my wandering Steps! *I have gone aſtray like 'a loſt Sheep: ſeek* and reſtore *thy Servant. 'I have forſaken thee, yet O! caſt me not off 'for ever.*'

2. Let every one of us ſeriouſly conſider how far he ſtands expoſed to that *Terror of the* LORD which hath now been briefly opened.— *I will caſt thee off for ever!* — Sinner, ſuppoſe thou heareſt thy Maker pronounce thoſe Words from Heaven in Thunder, would they not aſtoniſh and confound thee? Believe it, they are as true as if thou didſt, and why doſt thou not tremble?— If thou canſt make ſhift to *brave* the terror of

(*d*) Prov. xxviii. 26.

of the Threatening, *I will caſt thee off*; thou wilt never be able to *bear* that of its Execution, *Go thou curſed!* —— Not to think (the only ſad refuge thou haſt now left) will then no longer be in thy Power.— But, alaſs! are theſe things the leſs true for thy not thinking of them? —— Why wilt thou venture on the fatal Precipice blindfold becauſe thou canſt not bear the hideous ſight? were it not wiſer to open thine Eyes and avoid it? And, be aſſured, that the dreadful Ruin may yet be avoided; and, even now, *if thou ſeek the* LORD, *he will be found of thee.*

To conclude, let thoſe who have good hope that they ſhall eſcape *the Wrath to come* remember to whom they owe their Hopes. How thankful ſhould you be that you are not *of them that draw back to Perdition!* When you behold the wretched caſe of hardened and incorrigible Apoſtates, and ſurvey the Foundation of your own *bleſſed Hope*, adore the Divine Grace that hath made the Difference; and remember that *by Grace you ſtand*; by that Grace which brought you into the way of Life, you muſt be preſerved and conducted in it. Love

and

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and honour the great Author of your Deliverance, and humbly pray that he would go on to *ſtrengthen ſtabliſh, and ſettle you*; and keep you *by his Power through Faith unto Salvation.*

SER-

# SERMON X.

## The Nature of Aſſurance and the Way to attain it.

2 COR. V. 1.

*For we know that if our earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a Building of* GOD, *an Houſe not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.*

TO diſcern the Connection of theſe Words with the foregoing, we muſt look back as far as the ſixteenth verſe of the preceding Chapter; where the Apoſtle ſais, *for which cauſe we faint not, but though our outward*

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*man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, while we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen: for the things which are ſeen are Temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are Eternal.* As if he had ſaid, 'notwithſtanding all our Af-'flictions and Sufferings for Chriſt and his 'Goſpel, we are not caſt down or diſhear-'tened; but on the contrary we gather new 'Courage and Vigour from them, ſupported 'with this Thought, that theſe earthly trou-'bles are but Temporal, but the heavenly 'glory which ſucceeds is Eternal: upon 'which eternal Glory whilſt we keep the 'Eye of our Faith ſtedfaſtly fixt, *we faint 'not* under any of thoſe Tribulations we 'meet with in the way to it; *for we know or* '(are aſſured) *that if our earthly Houſe of 'this Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a 'Building of* GOD, *an Houſe not made with 'hands, eternal in the Heavens.'*

This verſe contains ſeveral *Metaphors*, which muſt all be diſtinctly opened and explained

plained ere the true Senſe of the Words can be comprehended. I ſhall therefore SERM. X.

I. Explain and open to you the beauty and propriety of the ſeveral Metaphors here uſed.

II. Shew you the Force of the Apoſtle's Argument, that the Aſſurance of eternal Glory is the beſt ſupport under all temporal Calamities.

III. I ſhall make ſome general Remarks on the Doctrine of Aſſurance as founded on theſe words. And

IV. Briefly ſhew how that Aſſurance is to be obtained.

I. I am to open to you the beauty and propriety of the ſeveral Metaphors here uſed.

The Apoſtle here gives us a metaphorical Deſcription both of the preſent and future State of the Saints exiſtence.

1. Let us attend to the Metaphors whereby he deſcribes the Saint's exiſtence in his preſent mortal Body, which he compares

1. To an *earthly Houſe*. It may fitly be called a Houſe in regard to the Soul its im-

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mortal Inhabitant, and in regard of its beautiful Fabrick, Ornaments and Conveniency. It is well fitted up for the ſhort term the Tenant is to hold it. Our Bodies are *fearfully and wonderfully* made *(a)*, their Structure is exceedingly curious, finiſhed with exquiſite Art and aſtoniſhing Machinery. But then they are but *earthly* Fabricks, Houſes of Clay; whoſe *Foundation is in the Earth*, and whoſe Superſtructure is of the ſame. They are made of Earth, and will ſoon crumble to Earth again.

2. The Apoſtle further compares the Body to a *Tabernacle* or Tent. This is added leſt the former Metaphor ſhould be ſuppoſed to imply that this beautiful fabrick of Earth was the Soul's proper Dwelling-place: it is therefore more fitly compared to a Tabernacle.

Becauſe it is moveable, and ſoon taken down, a Tabernacle is a portable Houſe, ſo ſlightly compacted that it may preſently be taken to pieces; ſo the Body is not only the moving Receptacle of the Soul, but its Frame is ſoon diſſolved. It was not built for Ages: the leaſt Accident may deſtroy it:

*(a)* Pſalm cxxxix. 14.

it: and though no Violence be offered to it, yet it will in a very little time fall down of itſelf. Again SERM. X.

It is fitly compared to a Tabernacle becauſe it is no proper abiding-place for the Soul. A Tabernacle is not a *Manſion*, or a place of fixt Abode; only a kind of Shelter raiſed on a ſudden to ſerve a preſent Convenience. So the Body is not the Soul's Reſidence, only its Lodging. It is but a very little while ere it will quit this Tabernacle for a more durable Habitation.

*Laſtly*, Tents or Tabernacles denote that they who reſide in them are at a diſtance from their Home, and in a ſtate of Warfare or Pilgrimage; and therefore are obliged to take up with theſe for want of more ſuitable Accommodations. In this view the Metaphor is very beautiful. The Soul which inhabits this earthly Tabernacle is in a State both of Warfare and Pilgrimage, not only at a diſtance from its proper Home, but in an Enemies Country; and meets with many a rude Encounter in this ſtrange and hoſtile Land. But at the ſame time, it is on its Journey Homewards; and travelling to a better Country.

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With ſo juſt a Propriety does the Apoſtle compare the mortal Body to a Tabernacle. He had juſt before called it an *earthly Houſe*; a very diminutive Term! but he ſeems to correct himſelf. As if he had ſaid, 'but 'this mortal Body is not ſo ſteadfaſt and du-'rable, not ſo commodious or ſafe a Re-'ceptacle as a Houſe; call it rather a Ta-'bernacle.'

2. We are now to conſider the Metaphor whereby the future habitation of the pious Soul is deſcribed, in thoſe words: *a Building of* GOD, *an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.* Here the Apoſtle may be ſuppoſed to refer, either

To that glorious, ſpiritual, incorruptible Body with which the Soul ſhall be clothed at the *Reſurrection of the Juſt*; which ſtands in a very natural Oppoſition to this frail, mortal, corruptible Body, which in the Beginning of the verſe he calls an *earthly Houſe*. And that the Soul of the pious Chriſtian ſhall hereafter be inveſted with ſuch a glorious and ſpiritual Body appears from thoſe words of the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* xv. 44. *It is ſown a natural Body*, it is *raiſed a ſpiritual Body*; and verſe 53, *this corruptible muſt put on Incor-*

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*corruption, and this mortal muſt put on Immortality* : or

The Apoſtle may here refer to the Heavenly ſtate in general, which in Scripture is called the *Houſe of* GOD. *In my Father's Houſe* (ſais Chriſt) *are many Manſions (b)*; that is, reſting or abiding places, where the Soul ſhall ſecurely dwell without the Fear of being ever removed, or incommoded more. And the future Habitation of the Soul ſtands directly oppoſed to its preſent mortal Tenement: *this* is but a Tabernacle, *that* a Houſe; *this* at beſt but an earthly Houſe, *that* a Building in Heaven; *this* is to endure but for a time, *that* is Eternal: and being ſo glorious and durable, it is emphatically called a *Building of* GOD. Hence the Apoſtle ſaith of *Abraham, that he looked for a City which hath Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is* GOD (*c*).

II. I am now to ſhew you the Force of the Apoſtle's Argument, that the aſſurance of eternal Glory is the beſt Support under all temporal Calamities.

*For this reaſon* (ſais he) *we faint not* —— *for we know that if this earthly Houſe of our Taber-*



(*b*) John xiv. 2. (*c*) Heb. xi. 10.

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*Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a Building of* GOD, *an Houſe not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.* The Apoſtle here ſuppoſes the worſt of the caſe, *viz.* that our temporal Afflictions are ſo grievous as to iſſue in Death, an intire diſſolution of our Earthly Houſe or Tabernacle; yet (ſais he) even then *we faint not*, becauſe we hope for *everlaſting Habitations:* and if this Hope can ſupport the Soul under the laſt and moſt exquiſite Diſtreſs of Nature, much more under the lighter Burdens of Life.

And indeed this Reaſoning is ſo ſtrong and evident that it needs but little Illuſtration. However the mighty Efficacy of this Hope we may briefly repreſent to our ſelves under the three following particulars.

1. This aſſures the Soul that all the Afflictions of this mortal Life are but light and tranſient: and when longeſt and heavieſt, if once compared with that eternal weight of Glory which ſucceeds them, are as nothing. This was the Apoſtle's determination of the caſe; *for I reckon* (ſais he) *that the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed* (*d*), and the reaſon of

(*d*) Rom. viii. 18.

of this he tells us is, *for our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory (e).* SERM. X.

2. During the preſent ſhort Space of Suffering, this aſſured Hope of a bleſſed Immortality revives and entertains the Soul with the moſt delightful Views of it. It looks beyond all theſe tranſitory Uneaſineſſes to that World of everlaſting Peace to which it is going. 'There (ſais the pious man) 'after a few more trials of my Faith and 'Patience, there ſhall I live in everlaſting 'Reſt, at that peaceful Haven ſhall I arrive 'when I have weathered a few more Storms: 'and whilſt I view my title to the Heavenly 'Manſions clear, methinks *none of theſe 'things* need greatly *move me.*' Therefore

3. This Aſſurance contributes further to the Support of the afflicted Mind, as it diſpoſes it to a meek and quiet Reſignation to the Will of GOD. The Soul can readily ſhew a peaceful Submiſſion to all the Divine Diſpoſals with regard to its earthly Intereſts, when it is once ſure of a Heavenly Inheritance. 'However it goes with me 'here

(e) 2 Cor. iv. 17.

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'here, (ſais the Chriſtian) it will go well 'with me for ever; ere long I ſhall enjoy 'a Happineſs my Heart cannot now con-'ceive. Be content then, O my ſoul, to 'bear the preſent Load. Theſe tranſient 'Sufferings will ſoon be changed for ever-'laſting Enjoyments. Be willing to receive 'the bitter Cup at that Hand which will 'ſhortly reach forth to thee, an Immortal 'Crown.'

There are many other particulars from whence it appears that this firm Aſſurance of Heaven gives the Chriſtian the greateſt Supports under the Sorrows of Life. But theſe three, I believe, are the principal: becauſe we may obſerve, it is generally the want of theſe Sources of Comfort that renders temporal Troubles the moſt inſupportable; *viz.* an apprehenſion of their tedious and long Continuance, a dread of the final Iſſue, and Reluctance, or Impatience under them.

But I proceed now to the principal thing I intended. *viz.*

III. To make ſome general Obſervations on the Doctrine of *Aſſurance*, which is founded on the Words of the Text. And

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1. I obſerve from hence that an Aſſurance of Heaven is attainable in this Life. It is attainable becauſe it has been attained. Witneſs the caſe of the Apoſtle *Paul*, who not only in the Text but in many other places expreſſes his undoubted Aſſurance of being happy in the future State. And that we may not think that this was a priviledge peculiar to him as an Apoſtle, we have a general command in Scripture to labour after the ſame; *we deſire that every one of you* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *do ſhew the ſame diligence to the full Aſſurance of Hope unto the end (f).* But

2. I would obſerve that it is not eaſily nor ſuddenly to be attained. It requires much Labour, Self-denial, and Vigilance; an extenſive Knowledge in Religion, a long Acquaintance with the Heart, much Experience, Self-diſcipline, and Faith; and is the fruit of a ſteady, uniform, habitual Practice of univerſal Piety, nor can it be ſuppoſed that a Priviledge ſo invaluable ſhould be ſuddenly attainable, and therefore they who are forward to boaſt of their Aſſurance, and how eaſily they came by it are juſtly to

(f) Heb. vi. 2.

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to be ſuſpected of lying under the power of a ſtrong Deluſion. Therefore

3. I would further obſerve that there is no ſmall Danger of miſtaking in this matter. And it is a matter wherein many have been fatally miſtaken; under the influence of falſe Hopes and carnal Confidence, which intoxicate the Soul, and (like a *Delirium*) render it inſenſible of its Diſtemper; which for that very reaſon appears to be the more dangerous. It may not be amiſs then briefly to mention ſome of thoſe Sources from which this falſe Aſſurance ariſes: and

1. It is often the Effect of wrong notions in Religion, ſuch as the Jews had; who muſt needs think themſelves the Favourites of Heaven, becauſe they were the *children of Abraham*. GOD declares in his Word again and again, that *he is no reſpecter of Perſons*; but *will judge every one according to his Works*: yet (how it is I know not) it is very hard for ſome Perſons to believe this; who fondly imagine (upon what grounds they know beſt) that they have a peculiar Intereſt in the Divine Favour above others, although their Tempers and Converſation

verſation by no means ſhew that they are the proper Objects of it. SERM. X.

2. A too ſanguine and confident temper of Mind often betrays men into theſe falſe Hopes. Such are always over haſty in drawing the Concluſion before they have well conſidered the Premiſes; and run up a ſlight Superſtructure, through an impatience of examining the Foundation. They determine almoſt without thinking; and what is worſe, are never in the wrong. This precipitance of Temper joined with much Self-eſteem and Vanity, lead them ſuddenly to form good Hopes of their future State with very little Evidence from Scripture or Reaſon. Such is often the fruit of Bigottry or Superſtition: and

3. This falſe Aſſurance often flows from groſs Ignorance, even when there is little or no Bigotry or Superſtition in the caſe. Thus ſome poor untaught Creatures, who have never had thoſe ordinary means of Information which the Goſpel affords, either through a want or neglect of them, make no doubt at all but it ſhall go well with them at laſt; becauſe, perhaps, *they have done no Body any harm*, and never committed

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ted thoſe open and flagrant Immoralities which they ſee others to be guilty of: eſpecially if they have Time enough at laſt to put up a ſhort prayer for Mercy, and declare that *they die in charity with all the World.*

4. Some ſuddenly attain good Hopes of themſelves through mere Indolence and Averſion to Thought. They hope, but they do not know why; and are fully perſuaded of they know not what. It is a Pain to them to think, and a greater to doubt: they make no queſtion but they ſhall fair as well as others; ſo are content even to take their Lot as it falls: at the ſame time, if you will believe them, there is nothing in the World ſo ſure as their *Hope to be ſaved.* And let me add

*Laſtly*, That even Infidelity is ſometimes the means of inſpiring Men with falſe and confident Hopes as to their future State: at leaſt one would be tempted to think ſo, to behold their Security with regard to the ſtate of their Souls, and that ſtrange Unconcernedneſs with which they talk of Death and another World.

It is notorious that Perſons of theſe different caſts of Mind often entertain the moſt

most confident Hopes of being happy hereafter; and yet if we impartially consult the Word of GOD we are assured that all such Hopes, however confident are vain and fatally delusive. So that hence it appears, that it is an easy thing to be mistaken in this matter. Again SERM. X.

4. I would observe that though this false Assurance be very common it is very dangerous, and if continued in, of irreparable Detriment, It is a dreadful thing *to go down into the Grave with a Lye in the right hand*; and to admit no proper Sense of things till Death and Judgment bring the Conviction too late. And therefore

*Lastly*, We cannot be too careful, or cautious in determining a matter which is in its consequences of so vast Importance. A right Assurance is doubtless to be attained. But since it is so hard to be attained, since so many have mistaken it, and since a Mistake herein is so extremely dangerous, we cannot proceed in this Affair with too much Evidence and Caution: which now introduces the next thing I proposed, *viz.*

IV. To

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IV. To ſhew in what Manner we are to proceed in this Affair, or how a right Aſſurance of future Happineſs may be attained.

And the five following Particulars, I think, will afford us a very ſafe and ſufficient Direction in this Matter.

1. In order to a well-grounded Aſſurance of future Happineſs there muſt be a well informed Conſcience and a good Underſtanding in the right way to Salvation. This I mention firſt as the Foundation of all the reſt: for a Man can have no ſettled Hope, much leſs a full Aſſurance of his future Felicity, whilſt he remains doubtful or ignorant of the right Way to it. A Miſtake here is ſtumbling at the Threſhold. And it is for want of this Information that ſo many poor creatures make no Doubt of being happy hereafter, who according to their preſent Diſpoſition and Temper are abſolutely incapable of being ſo.

In order therefore to a well-eſtabliſhed Hope of Heaven, there muſt be a right Knowledge of the Nature of that Happineſs which is to be there enjoyed, the proper Qualifications for it, and how thoſe Qualifications are to be attained. In all which points

points we have very clear and ſufficient Information from the Divine Word: where we are told, that this Happineſs was purchaſed for us by Jeſus Chriſt; that it conſiſts in the Enjoyment of God; that our Qualification for it is our Likeneſs to Him in moral Excellence, or the Purity and Holineſs of our Natures; and that this is the effect of a Divine Operation on the Heart, in Concurrence with our own conſtant, ſincere and watchful Endeavours after it. This is, in brief, the Chriſtian Method of Salvation revealed in the Goſpel, and confirmed in part by the Dictates of Reaſon. And without this Knowledge of the right way to Salvation, how can there be any ſettled or well grounded Aſſurance of it?

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2. In order to eſtabliſh our Hopes of future Bliſs, there muſt be a ſincere Renouncing and Departing from all known Sin, thoſe that are more ſecret as well as thoſe which are more open to the Eye of the World. Herein conſiſts the very Eſſence of Repentance, not merely in Contrition and Sorrow, nor even in ſerious Purpoſes and Endeavours after Amendment, but in the actual Reformation of Life and Manners. And

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this Repentance must be sincerely renewed upon every Conviction of any particular Misconduct.

3. To this must be joined the Love and Practice of universal Righteousness; or a sincere and humble Obedience to all the Precepts of the Gospel. And this Obedience, if sincere, will be constant, impartial, and universal; conducted by the Word of GOD, as its Rule; flow from the Love of GOD, as its Spring; and directed to the Glory of GOD, as its End. Moreover

4. To attain unwavering Hopes of Immortal Glory, there must be a large and particular Experience of the Power of Religion, in the Government of our Passions and Propensions. This goes a great way to establish our Hopes. The more we experience of the Reality of Religion now, the more assured shall we be of its Rewards hereafter. The more our Souls are formed for the Enjoyments of Heaven, the surer Title we have to it.

*Lastly*, To all this must be joined a lively, and active Faith. Some have indeed, through great Weakness and Mistake, placed the very essence of Faith in Assurance;

as

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as if there could be no true Faith without it. But this is a dangerous Deception. It is certain there can be no Aſſurance without true Faith, but there may be true Faith without Aſſurance.

Faith may be taken in three Views: as it reſpects *Chriſt*, as it reſpects his Goſpel, and as it reſpects Futurity. As it reſpects *Chriſt*, it not only implies a firm Belief of the Goſpel Repreſentation of Him in all his Offices and Capacities, but a ſuitable Act and Behaviour towards him correſpondent thereunto: for inſtance, a Dependance on his Interceſſion and Sacrifice, as our Prieſt; the Submiſſion of our Minds to his Doctrine, as our Prophet; the Subjection of our Wills to his Authority as our King; and a Conformity of our Lives to his Example as our Pattern.—As it reſpects the Goſpel, it implies that firm Belief of it, which produces a ready Subjection of the Soul to all its Divine Principles and Precepts.—And as it reſpects Futurity, it contemplates Things to come as preſent, Things diſtant as near, and Things inviſible as ſeen.

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Now where all theſe Characters meet, the Perſon in whom they unite may entertain the fulleſt Aſſurance of his Title to Eternal Glory through Jeſus Chriſt that any Man can have who is unpoſſeſſed of it.

If any think that too much is here required to attain an undoubted Aſſurance of Heaven, they will pleaſe to conſider that we cannot go upon too ſure Grounds in a Matter of ſuch Importance, where a Miſtake is ſo common and dangerous; that the Subject of our preſent Enquiry is not the Foundation of a good and rational Hope, but the Evidence of a full and undoubted Aſſurance: and that whatever may be ſufficient to confirm the *former*, it is hard to ſay how the Want of any one of the forementioned Particulars can be conſiſtent with the *latter*.

I ſhall now conclude all with two or three brief Reflections. And

1. Let it be well remembered (what I have juſt hinted) that there may be a good and comfortable Hope of Heaven without a full Aſſurance of it. That confirmed Aſſurance of Soul which the Apoſtle expreſſes

preſſes in the Text, and which I have been now deſcribing the way to acquire, I doubt, is but a rare Attainment in the preſent dark degenerate State of Things. Few Chriſtians, I believe, can riſe higher, on a ſolid Foundation, *than good Hopes through Grace.* They hope their Souls are ſincere, that their State is ſafe, that they are not deceived; but ſtill they are not without their Doubts and their Fears. They often ſurvey their Evidences, and hope they are good, though not ſo bright and clear as they could wiſh. And thus, perhaps, their whole Life is divided between Hope and Fear, and their Mind checkered with Light and Shade. SERM. X.

2. Let thoſe who are of a more ſanguine and confident Temper learn hence to guard againſt a Spirit of Deluſion; the Influence of which, it muſt be owned, ſome have but too plainly diſcovered in this Affair. I know not how any can pretend to Aſſurance without the above mentioned Marks of it. If it may be had at a cheaper Rate, I am deceived: it becomes them to look well to it that they are not ſo. How much is neceſſary to ſecure ſome comfortable Hope of

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Heaven, I ſhall not now take upon me to ſay; but I cannot conceive that any one thing that hath been ſaid is more than neceſſary to a *well-grounded and full Aſſurance.*

*Laſtly*, Let us all then be perſuaded to labour after it in the Way now preſcribed. You have now ſeen that it is attainable, and how it may be attained; and methinks the unſpeakable Satisfaction and Pleaſure that ſprings from it ſhould effectually induce us all to be ſtill preſſing towards it. O! how can the Joy and Rapture of that Soul be conceived, which upon the moſt rational Concluſion from the Word of GOD, and the moſt impartial Examination of itſelf, is able to ſay, 'I bleſs GOD, I am ſure of Hea-'ven; my Eternal Felicity I know is ſe-'cure; I am fully ſatisfied that in a very 'little time I ſhall be conducted by Angels 'into my Saviour's Preſence; and enjoy the 'Bleſſedneſs that flows from the Viſion of 'GOD, whatever that be: *for I know that 'if this earthly Houſe of my Tabernacle were 'diſſolved, I have a Building of* GOD, *an 'Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the 'Heavens.*' To which moſt happy State and

and World may GOD of his infinite Mercy through *Jeſus Chriſt* ſafely bring us all! though we ſhould never be ſo happy as to attain this *full Aſſurance* till we enter into the actual Poſſeſſion of it.

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# SERMON XI.

## Spiritual Reſt.

MATT. xi. 29.

*--- And ye ſhall find Reſt unto your Soul.*

The whole Period runs thus.

*Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart; and ye ſhall find Reſt unto your Souls: for my Yoke is eaſy, and my Burden is light.*

THE Soul of Man confined to Fleſh, fettered with Senſe, and ſubject to the Pains and Inconveniences of a mortal Body, is in a kind of unnatural Situation; and by

by it's continually wanting and wiſhing for ſomething it cannot here enjoy, ſhews that it is at a Diſtance from its native Home and proper Reſt. As Bodies under ſome unnatural Force, or Bias, are perpetually toſſed and agitated this way and that way, and never at Reſt till they have regained their proper Centre; ſo the Soul is never *kept in perfect Peace till it be ſtayed on its* GOD *(a)*. SERM. XI.

And why are Men in general ſo inſenſible to this Impreſſion? but becauſe they do not more frequently converſe with themſelves. The cares of the World and the Concerns of Life poſſeſs their Hearts and engage their Thoughts ſo intently, that they have neither Leiſure nor Diſpoſition to attend to what paſſes within; or to conſult the State, Temper, or Habit of their own Minds. The Things of the World are of ſo intoxicating a Quality that, like a Delirium, they make a Man miſtake his Diſtemper for his Happineſs.

Now to a Soul that is ſenſible of this, and groans under the aggravated Burden of Mortality and Sin, what a reviving Cordial is this Promiſe in the Text! where we have our

*(a)* Iſai xxvi. 3.

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our Lord's own Word for it, that there is a Way wherein even now we may *find reſt unto our Souls.*—What that Reſt is—Where it is to be found — And what the Foundation of it, I am now to conſider; and ſhall afterwards make ſome proper Improvement of the Subject.

I. I am to conſider what is the Nature of that Reſt which the Soul now wants, and which our Saviour here promiſes. And

1. I would obſerve it is not an Indolent Reſt. It does not conſiſt in a Ceſſation from Action. This is a Reſt of which the Soul is not capable: for it is in its own Nature a moſt active Being; and is never more at Reſt than when it is moſt intently engaged in the moſt agreeable courſe of Action, or exerts itſelf, with the freeſt Activity, on the moſt ſuitable Objects. Nay, if it were capable of inactive Reſt (as the Body is) that would be ſo far from being a Satisfaction, that it would be a Pain and Torment to it, which we may very well infer from that uneaſy State it is in when it cannot be ſuitably employed. If it be not

ſet

ſet to Work about its proper Buſineſs, it will employ itſelf about ſomething elſe though ever ſo mean and trifling: ſtill fleeing a State of Inactivity, as that to which it has an irreconcileable Averſion. SERM. XI.

2. The Reſt here promiſed is not merely a Freedom from the Burdens of the ceremonial Law. It is natural indeed to ſuppoſe from the Expreſſions here uſed, of being *weary* and *heavy-laden* (as the Jewiſh Church was with a Load of poſitive and ritual Ordinances) and from our Lord's calling his *Yoke* a *light* one (in oppoſition to that of the Jewiſh Ceremonies, which the Apoſtle ſais *neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear*) and from the *Reſt* here promiſed which ſeems to be oppoſed to the Labour and Fatigue required under the Moſaic Diſpenſation; I ſay, it is natural from hence to ſuppoſe that our Saviour in theſe Words might refer to that Change of Diſpenſation which he was about to introduce, by bringing in a better Covenant and eſtabliſhing a more happy State of Things under the Goſpel. But ſtill the Words are by no means to be confined to that Reference; becauſe it is a ſpiritual Reſt that is here principally promiſed

miſed, the *Reſt* of the *Soul*; and becauſe it is promiſed not only to thoſe who take his *Yoke* upon them, but to them who *learn of him*; that is, not to them who bear the Chriſtian Profeſſion only, but to them who have the Chriſtian Temper. Therefore

3. The Reſt of the Soul which is here promiſed is that which ſets it free, in a great Meaſure, from that anxious Diſquietude and Trouble to which it is here ſubject in a ſtate of Mortality and Guilt. I ſay, which ſets it in a great meaſure free from this; not intirely, for there can be no perfect Reſt to the Soul on this ſide Heaven, *the Saint's Everlaſting Reſt.* The Soul can never return to its perfect Reſt till it returns to its proper Home.

And as the Promiſe in the Text ſeems to have a double Aſpect, I ſhall conſider it under both; that is, as it reſpects the preſent Life and the future; the former more largely, and the latter more briefly.

1. Let us conſider the Subject of the Promiſe before us with reſpect to the preſent Life.

And as Reſt is properly a Freedom from Diſquietude and Pain, we may form our Idea

Idea thereof by attending to thoſe Things which are apt to create to the Soul its greateſt Uneaſineſs and Trouble, and by ſubſtituting the contrary in their Room. Now all the Perturbations and Anxieties of which the Soul is now ſenſible, I think may be reduced to one or other of theſe four Sources. SERM. XI.

Ungoverned Paſſions and Appetites;
The Reproaches of a guilty Conſcience;
The Fear of future Evil;
And an Unſatisfiedneſs with preſent Good.

Conſequently the Reſt of the Soul conſiſts in

The due Government of the Paſſions and Appetites;
The Approbation of a good Conſcience;
The joyful Hopes of future Good;
And a Satisfaction in the preſent.

1. The Reſt of the Soul conſiſts very much in the Diſcipline of the Paſſions and Government of the Appetites.

For let us conſider but a little what a deal of Vexation and Pain it often feels from the Predominance of its unruly Affections. Take for inſtance, the Paſſions of Anger, Jealouſy, Envy, and Avarice: How reſtleſs is the Soul till theſe are gratified! And when they are,

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are, it is generally much more ſo. Diſcontent alone will make a Man unhappy in the moſt agreeable Situation of Life. Does he fall under the Frowns of Providence, and ſuffer ſome of the common Calamities incident to the preſent State of Things? his Sorrows riſe beyond Reaſon, and his Vexation rages without Bounds. Do his Affairs proſper to his Wiſh, does he enjoy the ſmiles of the World and the Sun-ſhine of Life? why, if he has not learned the great art of Self-government, he is ſoon betrayed into that Haughtineſs of Heart, or Churliſhneſs of Temper which muſt in the conſequence create him much Diſappointment and Pain. So the Appetites of the Body, when they once become inordinate, whether they be ſatisfied or not, will of neceſſity be the Source of much Uneaſineſs. If they be diſappointed, the Pain is bad enough; if gratified, it is often much worſe.

The Reſt of the Mind then conſiſts very much in having the Paſſions ~~and Appetites all~~ under due Regulation: to deſire nothing but what is good, to hate nothing but what is evil; and to keep all the other Paſſions in their reſpective degree of Subordination

dination; that they neither fix upon wrong Objects, nor exert themſelves irregularly upon right ones. This is a principal Foundation of Reſt to the Soul: and this Reſt Religion gives; as it not only inſtructs but aſſiſts us in governing thoſe Paſſions which diſturb our inward Peace, and in cultivating and improving thoſe which, when under right Direction, greatly promote it.

2. The Approbation of a good Conſcience is another Ground of inward, ſolid Peace. Conſcience is commonly repreſented as erecting its Tribunal in every Man's Breaſt, where it is at once both Evidence and Judge; and whoſe Verdict and Sentence, if it be not bribed, or blinded, is *according to Truth*: And the Simile is juſt, beautiful and ſtrong: but after all means no more than what the Apoſtle *Paul* more plainly calls our own *Thoughts either accuſing or elſe excuſing us (b)*.

When the Conſcience of a Sinner is awakened by the Spirit of GOD to a juſt Senſe of its Sin and Danger, it begins to *write bitter Things againſt itſelf*: the Mind cannot bear its own Thoughts; but, like a Bone out

(b) Rom. ii. 15.

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out of Joint, every Motion gives it Pain. This Remorſe is ſometimes very exquiſite; the Conſcience groans under the Torture of its own Scourge; which becomes almoſt inſupportable: for *a wounded Spirit who can bear?*

O the Happineſs then of a ſettled Peace of Conſcience eſtabliſhed on the Foundation of the Goſpel! But a Sinner, whoſe Conſcience is thus inlightened and alarmed, can never be at Peace with himſelf, till he hath ſome good Hope that he is at Peace with GOD. Which hope can only be attained by a clear Evidence of his Intereſt in the Atonement of Chriſt's Blood, *which cleanſeth from all Sin*; manifeſted by that lively Faith which is attended with ſincere Repentance towards GOD, and produces a humble Dependance on the Merits of Chriſt for Juſtification and eternal Life.

3. Another ſolid Foundation of Reſt to the Soul is a joyful and ſettled Hope of future Happineſs. Certain it is there can be no permanent Reſt to the Soul without this. And the more this bleſſed Hope is eſtabliſhed, the more is the Peace of the Soul eſtabliſhed with it. And that this may appear with

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with a ſtronger degree of evidence, let us briefly conſider the State of the Mind, whilſt it lies under the Power of prevailing and ſuſpicious Fears.

The proper Object of Fear is Evil, either real or imaginary; reſpecting our Condition in the preſent World, or the future.

1. The Soul is often much diſcompoſed with the Fear of temporal Evil. We cannot ſee into Futurity; Clouds and thick Darkneſs reſt upon it. It may, for ought we know, be big with Calamity. And a timorous Mind is apt to afflict itſelf with the Fears of what is barely poſſible. It is a great Weakneſs indeed, but too incident to ſome tempers. — 'Should Providence 'bring upon me ſuch an Affliction, or take 'from me ſuch a Friend, or Comfort, or 'diſappoint me in ſuch or ſuch a View, 'O, what could I do? How could I live? 'The Remains of Life would be joyleſs; 'and all my Days conſumed in Sorrow.'

Or if the Mind have a more Religious Turn, it fears ſome future Temptation, ſome hard trial of Faith which will overſet its good Reſolutions, and make all its preſent Hope vaniſh into Wind. It is afraid of

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being left to itſelf, deſerted of GOD, and given up a Prey to its own Luſts.——Now, while ſuch Fears prevail, the Mind muſt of conſequence be greatly unhinged: it can never be at Reſt whilſt it lies under the Power of ſuch Apprehenſions. But

2. The Fear of what is to come after this Life is ſometimes much more terifying. The very Thought of *Eternity*, when duly weighed, prodigiouſly aſtoniſhes the Soul. It is like walking over a narrow Plank laid acroſs two Precipices ten thouſand Fathoms deep; the very ſight of which almoſt turns the Brain: and the bare Poſſibility of one falſe Step, makes us tremble.——But what is this to thoſe juſt and well-grounded Fears which a wicked man has, or ought to have, that (if he continue in his Sins) he ſhall be miſerable to Eternity: which is a Fear of the very greateſt Evil that can befal him: an Evil that is not only poſſible, but probable; not only probable, but certain. Every wicked Man, every Hypocrite, and Formaliſt in Religion, is expoſed to the Terror of theſe Apprehenſions; to which it is only the fatal Delirium of the Soul that renders them inſenſible.

If

If theſe kind of Apprehenſions are apt to give the Mind ſuch terrible Uneaſineſs, how ſweet and deſireable then muſt be the Peace that ariſes from the contrary Hope! that Hope with which nothing but an Intereſt in Chriſt, and the Voice of Conſcience teſtifying our Fidelity to him, can inſpire us. When this is once made ſure the Soul is at reſt: it is come to a Point; it hath gained its Center. —— 'Well, ſais the pious Chri-'ſtian, as to all my temporal Concerns, I 'know that *my Times are in* God's *Hands*, 'and all my Affairs at his Diſpoſal. And 'it is my Happineſs that they are ſo. I 'know not what is beſt for me; and there-'fore as I would not be my own Steward, 'ſo I would not only contentedly, but chear-'fully receive all that his wiſer Providence 'diſpenſes. Whilſt God is my Friend and 'Father, I have nothing to fear in this 'World, but every thing to hope in the 'other: nor would I part with this *Bleſſed* 'Hope for all the World can give me. And 'though I cannot ſay I have that triumph-'ant and doubtleſs Aſſurance which ſome 'talk of, and my Hope is not without a 'Mixture of Jealouſy at certain times, yet, 'I

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'I bleſs GOD, I am free from all ſlaviſh 'and tormenting Fears. I have examined 'the Foundation of my Hopes by the 'Word of GOD, and I think I ſee them to 'be different from thoſe of the Hypocrite 'and Enthuſiaſt. And by a careful Con-'formity to that Divine Rule I am daily en-'deavouring to brighten and eſtabliſh them; 'and have the pleaſure to ſee them ſtill in-'creaſing. And therefore as the dark Scenes 'and Proſpects of this Life do not greatly 'trouble me, ſo (bleſſed be GOD) the 'Thoughts of Death and Eternity do not 'diſmay and terrify me.'

*Laſtly*, Another Thing neceſſary to the Reſt of the Soul is the Satisfaction of its Deſires, in the enjoyment of ſome ſuitable Good, or its engagement to agreeable Objects. Whilſt it is confined to Employments unſuited to its Temper, or to Entertainments beneath its Taſte, it muſt of neceſſity be in a very uneaſy Situation. To illuſtrate this in one plain Inſtance. Suppoſe a Perſon of fine Senſe and improved Taſte ſhould be confined to the Company of Slaves, or Men in the loweſt rank of Life, and of the moſt courſe and uncultivated

Tempers

Tempers; their Jeſts would be impertinent, and their Manner ſhocking; nothing that they could ſay or do would entertain him; what pleaſed and amuſed them would to him be inſipid and irkſome. Somewhat like this we may poſſibly have found our ſelves, from the Company of ſome we have been accidentally thrown into; who have been extremely diſagreeable to us through a total Diſſimilitude of Taſte and Temper. Thus the Soul of Man when, diſciplined by Divine Grace, it improves its Taſte, begins to diſdain the Delights of Senſe; it feels itſelf capable of ſomething higher, and, conſcious of its Dignity, writes Vanity and Impertinence on all mortal Amuſements. SERM. XI.

Beſides, there is ſo vaſt a diſproportion between the nature of theſe Things and the Capacities of the human Soul (either through the Emptineſs of the one, or the Extent of the other) that it never was and never can be ſatisfied with them, though they be ever ſo well ſuited to its vitiated Reliſh. As well may our Hunger be ſatisfied with Sound, or our Thirſt with a Draught of Wind, as the Soul of Man with the Pleaſures of Senſe, which are ſo foreign from

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its Nature: load the ambitious Man with Preferments, roll the Miſer in Gold, fill the *Epicure*'s Cup till it runs over, they ſtill want more, and are as reſtleſs, diſcontented and uneaſy as ever.

But now the Soul of the pious Chriſtian is at Reſt; becauſe it hath ſomething to ſatisfy it. And what is that but the Love of GOD? in whom it finds what is ſuitable to its ſpiritual nature, large as its Deſires, and ſuperiour to all its Capacities.—'Here (ſais the Soul) I ſet up my Reſt. I 'have *taſted that the Lord is gracious.* From 'the ſweet Delight I find in GOD and his 'Ways, and the earneſt Deſire I have af-'ter a greater nearneſs and likeneſs to him, 'I ſteadily believe and hope that he is my 'Friend, and Chriſt my Saviour; and that 'when I depart hence I ſhall be happy in 'the Love of GOD, becauſe I find my chief 'Delight in him now.'

But after all, it muſt be owned that in the preſent ſtate of Things this Reſt is enjoyed by the moſt improved Chriſtians but in a very limited and contracted Degree. Therefore

2. That

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2. That perfect Reſt which Chriſt promiſes to all his faithful Followers is only to be found in the Heavenly State.

There alone do his Saints enjoy an unmoleſted Peace. For though it be moſt certain that Men of Piety and Prudence paſs through this World with much more Peace than others, yet whilſt they are in a ſtate of Mortality it is impoſſible for them not to meet with many of thoſe Diſquietudes and Pains which are inſeparable from it. They muſt wait for their perfect Reſt till they are fixt in purer Regions, free from their Connexion with ſenſible Objects, and above the Attraction of all Earthly Things.

Heaven is often repreſented to us in Scripture under this View, as a ſtate of *Reſt*. *There remaineth therefore a Reſt to the People of* GOD *(c)*; *Let us labour therefore to enter into that Reſt (d)*; *Let us fear leſt a Promiſe being left us of entering into his Reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it (e)*. But, O! what a Reſt that is, how ſweet and ſatisfying, how far beyond every thing we felt here, no mortal Tongue can tell, nor Heart conceive.



(c) Heb. iv. 9. (d) Ver. 11. (e) Ver. 1.

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This indeed is the moſt diſtinct and ſatisfying Idea we have of Heaven, though but a negative one. We know not what the Viſion of GOD is, what our Converſe with Angels will be, nor what the Glories of the celeſtial Manſions are; theſe things are hid from us; an impenetrable Vail ſeparates that *Holy of Holies*, that happieſt of happy Places from our inquiſitive View, and doubtleſs we ſhall be greatly ſurprized at our firſt Entrance there to find how infinitely defective all our Conceptions of it were. However this we do know that it is a State of perfect Reſt and Peace, and of this we have ſome pretty good Notion (if Things may be known by their Contraries) having been ſo long inured to Labour and Sorrow and Pain.

How ſweet is Bodily Reſt to a weary Man! It is one of the moſt agreeable Senſations the Animal nature feels. But how much ſweeter is ſpiritual Reſt to a weary Soul! —— Well, let us ſuppoſe then, if we can, a State wherein we ſhall find nothing at all to diſturb and diſcompoſe our Minds, but every thing to gladden and entertain them in a ſpiritual and Divine manner,

and

and then we have ſome Idea of Heaven. That is the *Reſt which remaineth to the Children of* GOD, and which we may well ſuppoſe is referred to in the Text. SERM. XI.

I ſhould now proceed to ſhew you how this Reſt is to be obtained, by conſidering the ſeveral particulars our Saviour mentions as the proper way to find it; and whence it ariſes, by laying before you the Connexion there is between this Reſt and thoſe holy Qualities to which it is promiſed. But this muſt be reſerved for the enſuing Subject.— I ſhall conclude what has been now delivered with two brief Reflections.

1. What Gratitude is due to the great Redeemer for this rich Proviſion of his Grace! This glorious Reſt which he hath here promiſed to us he hath himſelf graciouſly provided for us. It is part of the Legacy which he left his Diſciples when he departed from them. *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you, not as the World giveth, give I unto you, let not your Heart be troubled, neither be afraid* (*f*). And certainly the moſt valuable and laſting Peace flows from the Principles, and is main-

(*f*) John xiv. 27.

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maintained by the Practice of true Chriſtianity. The Goſpel of Chriſt lays the Foundation of all that Peace of Conſcience we here enjoy, and paves and points out the way to everlaſting Peace hereafter.

2. Let this encourage ſincere Chriſtians to bear with patience all the future Trials of their Chriſtian Pilgrimage. Tired with the Loads of Life, and preſſed down by a Weight of Cares and Griefs and Fears, *What muſt I do?* ſais the wearied Soul.—— 'Give them to the Winds,' ſais the Poet.— 'Caſt them on the Lord,' ſais the Chriſtian: which is better Advice. —— The Winds may blow them back again upon you; the Lord will ſuſtain them for you, or give you recruited Strength to bear them better. —— '*Come unto me*, ſais Chriſt, and 'I will both help and teach you how to 'bear them, firmly believe my Goſpel, 'learn to be *meek* and *lowly* as I was, ſub'mit to the eaſy *Yoke* of my Service, change 'the grievous *Burden* you are under, for 'the *light* one my Religion lays upon you; 'and depend upon it, *you ſhall find Reſt to 'your Souls.*'

SER-

# SERMON XII.

## The Way to procure Reſt to the Soul.

MATT. xi. 28—30.

*Come unto me all ye that Labour and are heavy Laden, and I will give you Reſt. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart: and ye ſhall find Reſt unto your Souls. For my Yoke is eaſy, and my Burden is light.*

THE method wherein I propoſed to treat of this invaluable Promiſe was

I. To conſider wherein that Reſt of the Soul conſiſts which is the Subject of it.

II.

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II. How that Reſt is to be obtained.

III. To ſhew you how fitly it is connected with the Conditions, or Qualifications here mentioned.

*Laſtly*, To conclude the Subject with a few Reflections.

I. I propoſed to conſider wherein the Reſt of the Soul which is the Subject of this Promiſe doth properly conſiſt.

And the Reſt here promiſed, I obſerved, was not an indolent Reſt; nor merely a Freedom from the Burden of the Ceremonial Law; but that which ſets the Soul free in a great meaſure from thoſe inward Diſquietudes and Troubles to which it is expoſed in this preſent ſtate of Imperfection and Guilt. Now moſt of our mental Uneaſineſſes ariſe either from the predominance of ungoverned Paſſions, the Reproach of a guilty Conſcience, the Fear of future Evil, or an unſatisfiedneſs with preſent Good. Therefore the proper Reſt of the Soul muſt conſiſt in the Reverſe of all this *viz.* the due Diſcipline of the Paſſions, the Approbation of a good Conſcience, a well-grounded Hope of future Good, and

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a ſatisfaction in the preſent. Each of theſe Things I have particularly conſidered, and concluded with obſerving that the perfect Reſt of the Soul is only to be enjoyed in the Heavenly State; to which the Promiſe in the Text ſeems to have an Aſpect. SERM. XII.

I proceed now

II. To conſider how this Reſt is to be obtained, or what are the Qualifications of thoſe to whom it is promiſed.

All the Promiſes of Scripture are conditional; or belong only to Perſons of ſuch a Temper and Character as are neceſſary to fit and qualify them for the Bleſſings promiſed: which Conditions or Qualifications are always either expreſſed or underſtood. So that when we have a Promiſe before us, and are conſidering whether we have a Right to it, or not; our firſt Buſineſs is to enquire into the true meaning and extent of the Promiſe itſelf; and our next to obſerve the Character or Qualifications of the Perſons to whom it is made; becauſe our Right to the Promiſe can only be known by our having that Character or thoſe Qua-

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Qualifications to which it is annexed. ¶ It is of dangerous conſequence to ſeperate the Priviledges from the Precepts of the Goſpel, or to claim the Comfort without complying with the Conditions of the Promiſes. This is taking of *Children's Bread* by violence, and is like *eating of forbidden Fruit.*

¶ Now as to the Promiſe under our preſent Conſideration, the Conditions are expreſs, and the Qualifications on which it is ſuſpended are Faith in Chriſt; expreſſed in thoſe Words, *Come unto me:* a Conformity to his Example; in thoſe Words, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly:* and Obedience to his Goſpel, and Subjection to his Authority; both which are comprehended in thoſe other Expreſſions, *take my Yoke upon you, for my Yoke is eaſy, and my Burden is light.*

1. The firſt Condition on which this Promiſe is expreſsly ſuſpended, or the firſt Qualification of thoſe to whom it belongs, is *Faith in Chriſt*, expreſſed in thoſe Words, *come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden.*

This is the Phraſe by which our Saviour uſually expreſſed what we commonly call *believing*

*believing on him. Him that* COMETH UNTO *me,* (ſaith he) *I will in no wiſe caſt out (a). Every man that hath heared and learned of the Father* COMETH TO ME *(b). No Man can* COME TO *me except the Father, which hath ſent me, draw him (c).* Now what he means by this Phraſe he himſelf tells us in the ſame Chapter; Verſe 40. *This is the Will of him that ſent me, that he that ſeeth the Son and* BELIEVETH *on him may have everlaſting Life;* and Verſe 47. *verily verily I ſay unto you, He that* BELIEVETH ON ME *hath everlaſting Life.* So Chap. vii. 37. *If any Man thirſt let him come unto me and drink;* which is explained in the Words immediately following thus, *He that* BELIEVETH IN ME, *out of his Belly ſhall flow Rivers of Waters.* So that to *come unto Chriſt* ſignifies *to believe in him.* Thus in the Text, *come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden;* that is, BELIEVE IN ME, *and ye ſhall find Reſt unto your Souls.* SERM. XII.

But

(a) John vi. 37. (b) *Ver.* 45. (c) *Ver.* 44.

(d) Our Engliſh Word *Proſelyte* is derived from a Greek Word which ſignifies *to come unto* προσηλυτος from προσερχομαι, advenio; therefore the forementioned places might as properly be rendered, *become my Proſelytes*, i. e. become Converts to my Religion; which is the preciſe meaning of the Expreſſion.

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But what is it to be a true Believer in Chriſt? It muſt ſurely mean ſomething more than believing the Truth of the Goſpel, or a bare Aſſent to the Divinity of its Doctrines: though this be all that ſome ſeem to underſtand by the Word *Faith*. Nay further, it muſt ſignify ſomething more than a mere Reliance on the Righteouſneſs and Merits of Chriſt for Salvation; wherein others ſeem to place the very Eſſence of Faith. Becauſe there may be a preſumptuous Dependance as well as a mere notional Faith; and neither the one or the other of theſe have any effect to *purify the Heart*, or make us fit for Heaven. And can that Faith bring us to Heaven which does not fit us for it? can that Faith ſave us which doth not Sanctify us?

So that it is not a bare Belief of the Chriſtian Revelation, nor a mere Dependance on Chriſt for Salvation, nor both of them together, that conſtitutes the Nature of that true, ſaving, juſtifying Faith, in Chriſt which is denoted by the Phraſe of *coming to him*, and upon which Scripture lays ſo great an Importance as indiſpenſably neceſſary to Salvation. But together with

with theſe there muſt be a hearty Compliance with the Terms of his Goſpel; an unreſerved Conſent to be what he requires, as well as to believe what he teaches. For without this we cannot be truly and properly ſaid to believe his Goſpel. For Inſtance, when we read that Doctrine of the Goſpel, *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord*; how can we ever perſuade any Man that we believe it, if we look and hope for Heaven without taking any care about this expreſs Qualification for it? Were others to judge by our Practice, they would conclude that we believed the direct contrary; *viz.* that without Holineſs we might ſee the Lord. SERM. XII.

And as the very Life of Faith conſiſts in this practical Conformity to its Object, it may not be amiſs here to obſerve, that the true Extent of that Faith which is eminently called *Faith in Chriſt*, is beſt known by its reſpect to him in all his Offices. For Inſtance, when it reſpects his Authority as our *King*, it influences to a ready Subjection to all his Will. When it eyes him as our *Prophet*, it meekly receives his Divine Doctrines and Inſtructions. And when it conſiders him

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as our *Prieſt* it leads us to depend intirely upon the Merit of his Atonement for our Pardon, and the Efficacy of his Interceſſion for our Acceptance.

There cannot therefore be any true or real Belief of the Doctrines or Precepts of the Goſpel without a correſpondent Compliance with them: or, which is the ſame Thing, that Faith which does not produce a Life and Temper ſuitable to its Object is no Faith, I mean no ſaving Faith: but is what the Scriptures call a *dead Faith*.

And to put this Matter beyond all Doubt, our Saviour himſelf has been pleaſed to explain it to us in the ſame manner, in the very Paſſage under our Conſideration. For having ſaid, *come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden*, he immediately adds by way of explication, *take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*: ſo that from his own Words we are informed, that a true Faith in him is inſeparable from a conformity to his Example. This therefore leads me

2. To conſider the next Qualification mentioned in the Text as neceſſary to intitle us to the Bleſſing promiſed; *viz.* a conformity

formity to the Example of Chriſt, eſpecially in the Meekneſs and Humility of his Temper. *Learn of me for I am meek and lowly; and ye ſhall find Reſt unto your Souls.* As if he had ſaid, 'Your conformity to my 'meek and lowly Temper will be the beſt 'Security of your temporal Peace, as a ſted-'faſt lively Faith in me is your proper Ti-'tle to Eternal Reſt.' SERM. XII.

Not but that we are equally obliged, as the Diſciples of Chriſt, to imitate him in every other Divine Virtue; but he here propounds to our Imitation only theſe two, as moſt proper in the preſent Caſe; being peculiarly adapted to diſpoſe and prepare the Mind for the Reſt to which they are annexed. To theſe therefore I ſhall confine myſelf at preſent. And

1. In order to find Reſt to our Souls, we muſt imitate our Saviour in the Meekneſs of his Temper. Meekneſs is generally joined with Humility; but they are two Qualities very diſtinct, as it appears from their Oppoſites: Meekneſs being oppoſed to Paſſion, and Humility to Pride.

To be Meek, is to be of a mild and even Temper under all Events, to be gentle and

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courteous in our Behaviour towards others, and to be patient in bearing the Afflictions that befall us either from the Hands of GOD or Man.

The firſt of theſe was an eminent part of the Redeemer's Character. All the Affecfections of his Soul were preciſely regular. Towards all Objects and under every Occurrence he diſcovered exactly that Temper and Diſpoſition, which the Nature and Circumſtances thereof required. As he was never tranſported into Paſſion on the one Hand, ſo he never betrayed an indolent abject Temper on the other: nor did all his Meekneſs prevent the warmeſt expreſſions of his Zeal for the Cauſe and Honour of GOD when the caſe required it.

No leſs exemplary was he for that Gentleneſs and Courteouſneſs of Temper, which is another Thing wherein Meekneſs conſiſts; in oppoſition to an arbitrary, fierce, tyrannical Spirit. How acceſſible was he to all Men! with what a diſintereſted Benevolence did he converſe with them! ſhewing himſelf a Phyſician to the Sick, a Comforter to Mourners, a Friend to the Helpleſs, and a Patron and Advocate to all under

Diſtreſs

Diſtreſs and Oppreſſion. The ſame Gentleneſs of Mind and Manners he requires of all his Followers; as one Branch of that *Wiſdom that cometh from above*; which is not only *pure*, but *peaceable, gentle, eaſy to be intreated*, and *full of Mercy (d)*. SERM. XII.

Patience under Sufferings is another Thing that enters into the notion of Meekneſs, whereof our Saviour hath ſet us the moſt illuſtrious Pattern. *He was led as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his Mouth (e) when he was reviled, he reviled not again (f)*. From the Meekneſs of his Temper as well as the Atonement of his Blood, he obtained the Title of the *Lamb of* GOD. Inſtead of loudly exclaiming againſt the unparalleled Injuſtice of his Enemies, he ſpent his laſt Breath in praying for their Pardon.——And though the Hand of GOD was heavy upon him, not one repining Word eſcaped him. His Human Nature indeed once recoiled, and if poſſible, would fain have had that *bitter Cup paſs from him.* But Faith and Duty ſoon overcame that ſinleſs Reluctance of Nature. *Father, if this Cup muſt not paſs away*



(d) Jam. iii. 17. (e) Iſai liii. 7. (f) 1 Pet. ii. 23.

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*away from me unleſs I drink it, thy will be done (g).*

Alas, how far ſhort do we fall of this admirable Pattern! But to be continually coming nearer and nearer to it is our daily Duty. Let us lay up theſe Words then in our Minds; and remember that herein our Maſter is daily calling upon us, ſaying, *learn of me for I am Meek.* And *I beſeech you by the Meekneſs and Gentleneſs of Chriſt*, to ſhew yourſelves his true Followers by the increaſing Prevalence of this amiable Diſpoſition.

2. The other Thing wherein Chriſt calls upon us to learn of him, in order to find Reſt to our Souls, is *Lowlineſs of Mind. Learn of me, for I am Meek and Lowly.* Lowlineſs is Humility; and ſtands in direct oppoſition to Pride or High-mindedneſs; or what the Apoſtle calls, *thinking of ourſelves above what we ought to think (h).*

It would be endleſs to point out to you all the Inſtances of Humility, that appeared in the Life and Temper of our Divine Maſter. How did he humble Himſelf to quit his celeſtial Dignity! to lay aſide his *own Glory,*

(g) Matt. xxvi. 42. (h) Rom. xii. 3.

*Glory*, and vail himſelf in human Fleſh! View the mean manner of his Life from his Birth to his Death; born in a Stable, of low Parentage; living in Obſcurity for thirty Years (at which Age the Jewiſh Prieſts entered upon their Office) and afterwards wandering from Place to Place to avoid the Perſecution of his Enemies; frequenting Deſarts, Mountains and Solitudes; avoiding as much as poſſible the applauſe of the Populace; willingly ſubmitting to Hunger, Thirſt, Labour, Watchings, Poverty and Reproach, for the Honour of his Father and the Good of Mankind; attended only by the pooreſt of the People, whoſe low Taſte and Ignorance gave occaſion to his Enemies to load him with the greater Ignominy; and after three Years and a half thus ſpent in Acts of Humility, Devotion, Self-denial and Beneficence, ſee him humbly reſigned to his Father's Will, and ſubmitting to the moſt grievous Sufferings Human Nature was capable of ſuſtaining — conſider this, I ſay, and then think what Contempt it throws on the Vanity of little inſufficient Creatures who preſumptiouſly pant after Wiſdom, Popularity and Fame. O, how does the SERM. XII.

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Lowlineſs of Jeſus *ſtain the Pride of all* human *Glory* (*i*) ! And to the ſame humble Temper does he call all his Diſciples, *learn of me, for I am lowly.* Humility is the firſt Leſſon that is taught us in the School of Chriſt; and he that hath not learned this, hath learned nothing.

3. Another Thing required of us by Chriſt as neceſſary to intitle us to the ſpiritual Reſt he promiſed, is to take *his Yoke* upon us.

As the Jewiſh Yoke, which was now to be taken off from the Necks of that People, denoted their Obedience to the Moſaic Ordinances, and Subjection to all the Laws of that Inſtitution, ſo by the *Yoke of Chriſt* we are to underſtand Obedience to his Precepts, or a Subjection to all the Laws and Orders of his Goſpel. And this ſenſe of the Word very well accords to the Original of the Metaphor: a Yoke is an Inſtrument whereby Oxen are confined and ſubjected to Labour in the Service of their Maſter; very properly then may thoſe Bonds and Obligations which as Chriſtians we are under to the Service of Chriſt be called his Yoke.

And

(*i*) Iſai xxiii. 9.

And to *take his Yoke* upon us is willingly to ſubmit to the Precepts of his Religion. This is the plain meaning of the Metaphor. So that in order to obtain that Reſt to our Souls which Chriſt promiſes, we muſt not only learn of him to be meek and lowly, but muſt in all Things approve our ſelves his willing and ſubmiſſive Servants. We muſt readily comply with whatever he enjoins us, whether it be eaſy and delightful, or laborious and difficult. The Metaphor itſelf implies that ſome of the Commands of the Goſpel require Patience, Self-denial and Labour. But they are the Commands of Chriſt, and muſt be obeyed. And for our Encouragement he tells us that his Service is not only the way of Peace, but that in reality it is not ſo difficult as we are apt to apprehend. *My Yoke is eaſy.*

4. The laſt Thing mentioned by Chriſt as neceſſary to qualify us for ſpiritual Reſt, is to ſubmit to his *Burden.*

As the former Metaphor denoted Service, this denotes Suffering. And implies that we muſt be willing to undergo ſome Hardſhips and Troubles for the Cauſe of Chriſt and a good Conſcience; and be ready not only

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to obey, but to ſuffer for the Goſpel, whenever Providence calls us to it. But for our Encouragement he tells us that as *his Yoke is eaſy* ſo his *Burden is light*. It does not make Men *weary and heavy laden*, like the Burden of the ceremonial Law, or a Load of Guilt upon the Conſcience: but, on the contrary, is here recommended by our Saviour as the moſt effectual Relief under thoſe Burdens; and whilſt it takes off the Preſſure of them, it ſubſtitutes nothing that is grievous in their room. In a Word, whatever Burden lies heavy upon us, the beſt way to lighten it is to take upon us the Burden of Chriſt; which will not only alleviate every other Weight, but by the Help of his Grace, the Comfort of his Word, and the Support of his Spirit, will become ſo light and eaſy as to give the Soul the ſweeteſt Reſt.

Having thus opened to you the Promiſe and the Conditions of it, I proceed now

III. To ſhew you the Connection there is between them; or how properly theſe ſeveral Conditions conduce to the ſpiritual Reſt,

Reſt, which our Saviour promiſes to all that comply with them. And SERM. XII.

1. Faith has a direct tendency to ſet the Soul at Reſt. For conſidered as a living active principle of Obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt, it is the beſt Evidence we can have of our Intereſt in him. What can ſet the Soul at Reſt under all its outward Troubles and inward Sorrows, like ſome clear undoubted Evidence that we are *in Chriſt Jeſus*, that we are his *Diſciples indeed*, and conſequently have a Title to all the invaluable and eternal Bleſſings he died to purchaſe? And what can give us this confirmed and joyful Hope, like a lively operative Faith gradually forming us to the temper of the Goſpel, and fitting us for the Happineſs it promiſes? Whatever notion we have of Faith, if we leave out this its operative Influence, it is impoſſible it ſhould afford any ſolid or laſting Reſt to the Soul.

2. Another expreſs Condition of this Reſt is, to imitate Chriſt in his meek and lowly Temper. And how neceſſary this is to the Reſt of the Soul appears from hence. Meekneſs and Humility preſerve the Ballance of the Paſſions,

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Paſſions, prevent their Exorbitancy, and guard the Mind from that Tumult and Uproar which they often raiſe, and ſometimes produce the worſt effects there. And in fact we may obſerve that none paſs through the World with more Serenity and Quiet, than they who are moſt diſtinguiſhed by a meek and humble Spirit. But

3. How does the *Yoke* of Chriſt ſet the Soul at Reſt? A Yoke is a Badge of Servitude, and put on for Labour. To *reſt under a Yoke* may ſeem a Paradox to ſome not eaſy to be ſolved. But to them who underſtand the nature of this Yoke it will appear far otherwiſe.— Chriſt himſelf calls it an *eaſy* one. And I have before obſerved to you that the Reſt of the Soul does not conſiſt in Indolence or Inactivity; that it is never more at Reſt than when it is agreeably employed. Why then may it not find Satisfaction in being employed in the Service of Chriſt, and obeying the moſt wiſe and reaſonable Commands of the Goſpel? which is all that is meant by *taking his Yoke* upon us.

But this is not enough. What I am to prove is, that ſuch a Service, or Employment

ment of the Soul is not only conſiſtent with its Reſt, but conducive to it. And this I think will appear very evident from the following Conſiderations. SERM. XII.

The Service of Chriſt ſets the Soul free from the much more laborious Servitude of Sin; ſo that it changes the moſt difficult and vileſt Slavery for the moſt eaſy and honourable Service. And muſt not ſuch an Exchange contribute greatly to its Peace?

Beſides, it is hereby ſet at liberty from the moſt miſerable Bondage, as well as the moſt cruel Servitude. The Devil makes all his Captives work in Chains. The ſervice of Chriſt is the moſt perfect Freedom. How ſweet is Liberty after a long Impriſonment! It is true, Religion lays us under ſome Confinements, but they are of ſuch a Nature as to conſiſt with the moſt deſireable Freedom; and are neceſſary for our Safety; and ſure we have no great reaſon to complain of thoſe Reſtrictions, which are only deſigned to prevent us from running into Ruin.

The Chriſtian Precepts have an intrinſick excellency in them, ſuitable to the Nature of the Soul. The Goſpel propounds to it the

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the ſublimeſt Subjects of Contemplation. And the Human Soul is ſo active a Being that it is never more at Reſt than when it exerts itſelf in the freeſt manner towards the moſt worthy and agreeable Objects. And in praiſing, ſerving and adoring the ever Bleſſed GOD, the ſupreme Object of all its nobleſt Powers, conſiſts its perfect and everlaſting Reſt in Heaven.

And in fine, if any of the Duties of Religion appear difficult at firſt, the continued Practice of them, together with the concurrence of Divine Grace, renders them not only eaſy but delightful.

But *Laſtly*, How can Suffering conduce to the Eaſe of the Soul? To reſt under a Burden ſeems to be a Contradiction. But here let it be remembered,

That Chriſt's Burden is a *light* one.

That he always proportions the Strength of his Servants to the Burdens they are called to ſuſtain. He very well knows what they are able to bear, and will take care that none of their Burdens ſhall be too heavy for them. And if their Strength be great and their Burden light, they have no great cauſe to complain of, or be reſtleſs under it.

Beſides,

Beſides, the faithful Chriſtian not only receives extraordinary Supports and Comforts under his Sufferings, but thoſe very Sufferings are deſigned to form him for ſuperior degrees of future Bliſs, or *a far more exceeding weight of Glory*. So that even ſuffering for Chriſt and his Cauſe cannot deprive the pious Soul of its Tranquility; but is conſiſtent with its Reſt in this World, and conduſive to its everlaſting Reſt in the other. SERM. XII.

So natural a Connection is there between thoſe Things wherein the Reſt of the Soul conſiſts, and the Means our Saviour here preſcribes to attain it.——For a ſettled Peace of Conſcience can only be attained by a lively, firm and operative Faith in him and his Goſpel, which firſt produces a ſincere Repentance, and then a humble Dependance on his Propitiation for Pardon.——To imitate his Meekneſs is the beſt way to ſet the Soul at Reſt from the Turbulence of ungoverned Paſſions.——A Fidelity in his Service, according to the Rules of his Religion, will give us the trueſt Satisfaction and Content in all our preſent Enjoyments.——And a ſteady courſe of Self-denial in his Cauſe, and Submiſſion to his Will, is the beſt way

to

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to eſtabliſh the Hopes of our future Acceptance and Reward.

I ſhall now conclude all with two Reflections.

1. What a reſtleſs State muſt that Soul be in that is unacquainted with the Chriſtian Life and Temper. It is Religion only that can adminiſter laſting Peace to the Mind. It is in the ways of GOD that the Soul finds its true Reſt, and no where elſe. For *the Wicked are like the troubled Sea that cannot reſt; there is no Peace, ſaith my* GOD, *to the Wicked (k).* And how ſhould there? when inſtead of the Joys of Faith, the Peace of Meekneſs, the Pleaſures of a moſt rational Service, and the Advantage of Religious Diſcipline, they lie under the power of tormenting Fears, the Rage of unruly Paſſions, the Tyranny of their Luſts, and in all the Calamities of Life find no ſecret Comfort or Support from within.

2. The greater progreſs we make in Religion, the more Reſt ſhall we find to our Souls. The ſorrowful Dejection of Spirit which ſome good Chriſtians diſcover, is not owing to the Influence of a Religious Temper, but the Defects of it. Did they but ſtrictly

(*b*) Iſai lvii. 20, 21.

ſtrictly follow the Advice which our Lord gives them in the Text, and more carefully practiſe the Duties he here enjoins, their Peace would return; theſe very Things would bring it with them. SERM. XII.

What remains then? but that as we all of us deſire Reſt and Peace, we ſeek it in this way where alone it is to be found. Under all the Burdens of Life with which we are often *heavy laden*, let us go unto Chriſt by Faith, *take his Yoke upon us, and learn of him who was meek and lowly in Heart; and we ſhall find Reſt unto our Souls. For his Yoke is eaſy and his Burden is light.*

# SERMON XIII.

## The Happineſs of the Divine Bleſſing and the Way to ſecure it.

## A Sermon to young People.

GEN. XXVII. 38.

*And Eſau ſaid unto his Father, Haſt thou but one Bleſſing, my Father? Bleſs me, even me alſo, O my Father.*

IT is a very affecting piece of Hiſtory which introduces theſe Words. The Caſe was thus. *Iſaac* being far advanced in Age, and drawing near to the Cloſe of Life, intended in a ſolemn Manner to bleſs *Eſau*, his

his firſt born Son before he died. This Deſign *Iſaac* communicated to him, and was over-heared by *Rebecca* his Wife: who thereupon formed a Stratagem in favour of her younger Son *Jacob*, whereby he might defraud his Elder Brother of the Bleſſing intended him by his Father. And by means of *Iſaac*'s Infirmities, and eſpecially his Want of Sight, the Stratagem took effect; and the younger Brother obtained the Bleſſing inſtead of the Elder: ſoon after which *Eſau* himſelf came to receive it, according to his Father's Appointment; bringing with him the Proviſion he had ordered upon that occaſion. The ſequel of the Story I cannot better relate than in the very Words of the ſacred Hiſtorian, Verſe the 30th and following. 'And it came to paſs, as ſoon as *Iſaac* had 'made an end of bleſſing *Jacob*, and *Jacob* 'was ſcarce gone out from the preſence of '*Iſaac* his Father, that *Eſau* his Brother 'came in from his Hunting. And he alſo 'had made Savory Meat, and brought it 'to his Father, and ſaid unto his Father, 'Let my Father ariſe, and eat of his Son's 'Veniſon, that thy Soul may bleſs me. And '*Iſaac* his Father ſaid unto him, Who art

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'thou? and he ſaid, I am thy Son, thy firſt
'born *Eſau*. And *Iſaac* trembled very ex-
'ceedingly, and ſaid, who? where is he
'that hath taken Veniſon, and brought it
'me, and I have eaten of all before thou
'cameſt, and have bleſſed him? yea, and
'he ſhall be bleſſed. And when *Eſau*
'heard the Words of his Father, he cryed
'with a great and exceeding bitter Cry, and
'ſaid unto his Father, Bleſs me, even me
'alſo, O my Father. And he ſaid, Thy
'Brother came with Subtilty, and hath ta-
'ken away thy Bleſſing. And he ſaid, is
'not he rightly named *Jacob?* for he hath
'ſupplanted me theſe two Times: he took
'away my Birth-right, and behold now he
'hath taken away my Bleſſing. And he
'ſaid, Haſt thou not reſerved a Bleſſing for
'me? And *Iſaac* anſwered and ſaid unto
'*Eſau*, Behold I have made him thy Lord,
'and all his Brethren have I given to him
'for Servants: and with Corn and Wine
'have I ſuſtained him: and what ſhall I do
'now unto thee, my Son? And *Eſau* ſaid
'unto his Father, Haſt thou but one Bleſ-
'ſing, my Father? Bleſs me, even me alſo,

'O

'O my Father, aud *Eſau* lift up his Voice 'and wept.' SERM. XIII.

Thus you ſee in what manner the Words of the Text are introduced; which contain the earneſt and repeated Solicitation of *Eſau* for his Father's Bleſſing. Now, upon reading this Paſſage it is natural for us to reflect thus.—— 'If *Eſau* was ſo importunate for 'his earthly Father's Bleſſing, which at moſt 'would ſecure to him only ſome temporal 'Advantages, how ſolicitous ſhould we be for 'the Bleſſing of our Heavenly Father, which 'will not only ſecure to us temporal but 'everlaſting Happineſs?' ——My Diſcourſe from the Words ſhall be founded on this obvious Reflection; which I ſhall now endeavour to improve principally for the Advantage of thoſe who are in the younger part of Life: to whoſe attention therefore the preſent Diſcourſe has a particular Claim.

What I propoſe then is

I. To ſhew what you may expect from the Bleſſing of your Father who is in Heaven. And

II. What you are to do to ſecure it.

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I. I am to ſhew you what you are to expect from the Bleſſing of your Father, who is in Heaven *.

If you have indeed an intereſt in his Favour and Bleſſing, as your Father and Friend, O, what have you not to expect from him? *No good Thing will be withheld* from you. For his Bleſſing comprehends all Good. And without his Bleſſing nothing will do you good. Whatever you may have which you think good, if you have not his Bleſſing with it, you will find it in the end to be evil, for we are not to judge of Good and Evil merely by preſent Appearances. But the Bleſſing and Favour of GOD will be a Security to you of all poſſible Good: it ſhall be well with you in this World, and infinitely better for you in the World to come.

1. It ſhall be well with you in this World, whatever condition you may be in, or whatever Station you may be called to fill up.

If

* By the *Bleſſing of* GOD throughout this Diſcourſe I underſtand his peculiar Favour and all that Happineſs, Temporal, Spiritual and Eternal, which reſults from it.

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If Diſtreſs, Diſappointments, Loſſes, Sickneſs, and other adverſe Events are before you, the Bleſſing and Preſence of GOD will ſmooth theſe rough Scenes of Life, ſoften your Sorrows, convert them into Gladneſs, and make your ſoreſt Troubles prove your greateſt Mercies: ſo that you ſhall not only be able to bear your Trials better, but you ſhall gain a greater Benefit from them than others do.

And if Proſperity and good Days are before you, the Favour of GOD will inrich all your Comforts, give you a ſweeter Reliſh of them, and enable you not only to enjoy but improve them to the beſt advantage; and at the ſame Time preſerve you from thoſe ſecret Snares of Proſperity, which vain and thoughtleſs Minds are ſo often entangled in to the Ruin of their beſt Intereſt.

But that you may more clearly ſee how well it is like to be with you in this Life, if your Heavenly Father's Bleſſing attend you through the ſeveral Stages of it, let the following particulars be more diſtinctly conſidered.

1. The Bleſſing of GOD will render you more uſeful in the World than others in the

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ſame ſituation are. And to do all the good we can in the World to our ſelves and others is the great end for which we were ſent into it; and which we ſhould conſtantly keep in our Eye.

How many do we ſee that are altogether *Cumber-grounds?* who live to no manner of uſeful purpoſe either to themſelves or others? No Body is the better for them. They live only to themſelves; and to themſelves only for the loweſt and meaneſt ends, the gratification of their Vanity, Pride, Paſſion and Appetites.

And how many others do we ſee who are not only uſeleſs but miſchievous Members of Society? who live not only to no good, but to very bad purpoſes; for whom not only no body is the better, but a great many the worſe. And if all Mankind were to be of theſe two Characters, and to ſpend their Days either in doing no good or in doing harm, what a miſerable World ſhould we live in?

We have reaſon to be thankful to the good Providence of GOD, which hath favoured us with ſuch Talents and ſuch Opportunities of Improvement, that we are

capable of ſome degree of Uſefulneſs in the World already, or in a promiſing way of being ſo hereafter. I hope we are all endeavouring to be ſo to the extent of our Capacities: and the more thoſe Endeavours are attended with a divine Bleſſing the more ſucceſsful will they be. And the more ſolicitous we are for that Bleſſing, the more likely we are to obtain it; and to become a Bleſſing to the Age we live in, ſo far as the Sphere of our Action, and the Influence of our Example extend. And is not the Honour of being a Bleſſing to the Age in which we live an Object worthy our Ambition?



2. The Bleſſing and Favour of GOD will be your Guard againſt the Temptations and Snares of the World. The World is full of them: You will find it ſo, my young Friends, when you come to have a larger acquaintance with it. You will meet with many bad Examples which you have never before ſeen; and be obliged to converſe with Perſons of vain and diſſolute Minds, whoſe company you have never yet known. Some ſuch perhaps you may find amongſt your neareſt Friends and Acquaintance, who

ſhew

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ſhew little or no regard to GOD, or their Souls, or their Intereſt to come; whoſe Example may ſtrongly intice you into the Paths of Folly, and deceive you into an Opinion that there is no great Harm in thoſe looſe and irreligious Practices, which you ſee others ſo freely indulge. A Snare, into which thouſands of young Souls have fallen, to their utter Ruin; and which, when you come out into the World, you cannot be too much upon your Guard againſt.

But now if you are ſo happy as to ſecure the Bleſſing of GOD betimes, you will eſcape this fatal Snare: either his Providence will clear your Paths of that Danger, or his Grace will preſerve you in it; and will impreſs the Fear of GOD and a Senſe of Duty ſo deeply upon your Minds, that when ever you are ſolicited to any ſinful Compliances, you will be able to recollect yourſelf with *Joſeph*, and ſay: *How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and Sin againſt* GOD *(a)?* Such a Fear of GOD will be a Counter ballance to the Temptations of the World.

3. The Bleſſing of GOD will make you a Comfort and Credit to your Friends and Family;

(a) Gen. xxxix. 9.

Family; and will not fail to conciliate the Eſteem of all the wiſe and valuable Part of Mankind. You will be admired and loved by every one who knows how to diſtinguiſh and value real Excellence and Virtue. Every one will be fond of your Acquaintance, and deem your Friendſhip a real Honour; whilſt Children of Pride and Folly, who are full of nothing but Vanity and themſelves, will be deſpiſed, and ſhunned. You will be a Comfort and Honour to your Friends and dear Relations; who will be daily bleſſing GOD for making you ſo great a Bleſſing to them. They will ſincerely ſympathize in all your Sorrows, readily help you in all your Wants, and heartily rejoice in all your Happineſs. You will be their *Joy and Crown of rejoicing* now as well as hereafter: and not only the preſent but future Generations ſhall riſe up, *and call you Bleſſed.* You will not only be a Bleſſing to thoſe who are now living, but to many who are yet unborn. O, the Richneſs of that Thought! which one would think ſhould fire every great and generous Mind with a noble Ambition to be ſo extenſive a Bleſſing. Again

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4. The

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4. The Bleſſing of GOD is the beſt way to procure you earthly Proſperity. *Solomon* tells us, *it is the Bleſſing of the Lord which maketh rich (b).* Wicked and worldly Men may think and ſay what they pleaſe, but depend upon it as a certain Truth, That the beſt way to proſper in the World, is to ſecure the Favour and Bleſſing of that Almighty Being who over-rules all the Events of it; and who will be ſure to beſtow upon his Friends that portion of the Comforts of it which he knows to be beſt for them. How many do Vice and Extravagance reduce to Penury and Shame? whilſt others with the preſence of GOD live comfortably on a little, or by the Bleſſing of his Providence increaſe that little to a large Store? Such Inſtances are very frequent; which verify the general Obſervation, that as Honeſty is the beſt Policy, ſo Piety is the beſt Patrimony. I will only add

*Laſtly*, The Bleſſing of GOD will ſecure to you the beſt Enjoyment of the Comforts of this World. If your Allowance be but ſmall, you will taſte more Sweetneſs in it than others do in their Abundance.

The

(b) Prov. x. 22.

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The Royal Preacher takes notice of one *ſore Evil* which he ſaw *under the Sun* (and we may often obſerve the ſame) *viz. a Man to whom* GOD *hath given Wealth, Riches and Honour, ſo that he wants nothing for his Soul of all that he deſires, yet* GOD *hath not given him Power to eat thereof (c).* And in another place he ſpeaks of as ſore an Evil, *viz. Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt (d).* Nay, he expreſly tells us, that *the Proſperity of Fools ſhall deſtroy them (e).*

And how common a Caſe is this? How many do we ſee who are a great deal the worſe for the Affluence which the Hand of Heaven beſtows upon them? But now if you are ſo happy as to be in favour with GOD, you will not only improve the Bounties of his Providence to better Purpoſe, but enjoy them with a greater Reliſh than others do. In a word, the Bleſſing of GOD will not only make you a Bleſſing to all about you, but will make all you have a Bleſſing to you.

well/ So will it be with you in this World, if you have but the Bleſſing of your Father which is in Heaven. But beſide this,

2. Your

(c) Eccleſ. vi. 2. (d) Eccleſ. v. 13. (e) Prov. i. 32.

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2. Your Happineſs in the other World will be inconceivable.

A ſteadfaſt and lively Hope of this will fortify your Mind againſt the Fears of Death; and reconcile you to the Thoughts of that amazing Change. If GOD be your Friend you have nothing to fear from your laſt Enemy. It is but your Heavenly Father's Meſſenger ſent to bring you home. The Meſſenger himſelf indeed may appear formidable, but the Meſſage he comes upon is the happieſt and beſt for you that can be. It is to conduct you to your Father's Houſe: to introduce you into Life, Liberty and Immortal Joys.

Indeed the alteration which Death makes in our Exiſtence is unknown, and juſtly aſtoniſhing. For the Soul to be torn from the Body, and to be turned out a naked Spirit into a World invifible! infinitely removed from every mortal and material Object! It Shudders at the Thought, and knows not what to think of the amazing Change. —— But be it what it will, you may be aſſured, if you have the Favour and Bleſſing of GOD, it will be a happy Change for you; much more happy than you can now

now imagine. The great Redeemer and Lover of your Souls will recieve your departed Spirit, and be your FRIEND in that unknown World; and preſent you before his Father, and the Father of your Spirit, *with exceeding Joy*. He who was the Guide of your Soul through the hidden Snares and Dangers of this Life, will be the Guardian of it when departed hence. And not only ſo, but will ſatisfy it with Happineſs, and feaſt it with a fulneſs of Everlaſting Bliſs. SERM. XIII.

In fine, if GOD be your Friend, his Favour will be your Safety and Happineſs in both Worlds; the Bleſſings of his Love will follow you after Death; and *will never leave you, no, never, never will forſake you* (*f*).

And now, my young Friends, what ſay you? have you no Ambition to put in for this vaſt Fund of Felicity? Does not this ſhort View of it inſpire you with a ſtrong Deſire to ſeek and ſecure an Intereſt in your Heavenly Father's Bleſſing, which is the Foundation of it all? And can you hereupon

(*f*) Heb. xiii. 5. Οὐ μή σε ἀνῶ, οὐδ' οὐ μή σε ἐγκατα-λίπω.

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upon help crying out with the Importunity of *Eſau? O my Father, haſt thou not reſerved a Bleſſing for me? Bleſs me, even me alſo, O my Father.* Which introduces the ſecond Thing I propoſed, *viz.*

II. To ſhew what you are to do to ſecure your Heavenly Father's Bleſſing.

Now here I mean not to tire your Patience or burden your Memory with a multiplicity of Directions. I ſhall mention two very important ones. And I beg of you, if you do indeed deſire the Bleſſing of GOD that you would always conduct your ſelves with a Religious Regard to them. And they are theſe.

1. You muſt pray for it.

2. Your Behaviour and Life muſt be ſuitable to your Prayers for it, and Expectation of it.

1. You muſt pray for it; frequently, fervently, and in the name of Chriſt.

You muſt pray for it *frequently*, every Day at leaſt. And is it not worth aſking for? Can you aſk for any Thing better? You think it decent and dutiful frequently to aſk the Bleſſing of your Earthly Parents, and

and it is ſo. But is it not much more ſo to aſk your Heavenly Father's Bleſſing? who can actually beſtow upon you the Bleſſings which your Earthly Parents can only pray for. And can you expect to have them without ſeeking for? Be aſſured you never will. SERM. XIII.

Let me intreat you then, my young Friends, when you are repeating thoſe pious Forms of Prayer which your Parents or Teachers have put into your Hands to aſſiſt your Devotions in younger Life, to interpoſe this ſhort Petition for your precious Souls; and, with fervent Heart, and lifted Hands and Eyes, ſay, '*Bleſs me, even me alſo, O my Father*; that it may be well with me, both here and for ever.'—And therefore I add

You muſt not only pray for the Bleſſing of GOD frequently but *fervently:* with a deep ſenſe how much you need it; how happy it will make you; and how miſerable a Creature you are without it. You muſt be very ſincere and importunate in your Requeſts for it. Take the Example of *Eſau* for your Pattern. His Father told him he had already diſpoſed of his Bleſſing to his younger Brother. When *Eſau* heard this, into what an Agony did it throw him! *He*

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*cryed with a great and exceeding bitter Cry; and ſaid unto his Father, Bleſs me, even me alſo, O my Father.* ——His Father told him again, that the Bleſſing was already diſpoſed of; that he could not reverſe what was done. Upon this *Eſau* redoubles his Importunity, and with folded Hands and flowing Eyes, and elevated Voice, he powers out his whole Soul in the Requeſt, *Haſt thou but one Bleſſing, O my Father? haſt thou not reſerved a Bleſſing for me? Bleſs me, even me alſo, O my Father.*——And let it be remembered, All this was only to obtain a temporal Bleſſing. O, ſhew but half this Solicitude for Eternal Bleſſings, and you ſhall certainly have them: provided that you aſk for them

*Laſtly*, In the name of Chriſt: through whom, and for whoſe ſake alone GOD beſtows them upon us. And he himſelf hath promiſed, that *whatever we aſk the Father in his name, he will give it us* (g), that is, if it *be good for us*, and we do not *aſk amiſs*.

This then is the firſt Thing you muſt do to obtain your Heavenly Father's Bleſſing.

(g) John xvi. 23.

You

You muſt pray for it frequently and fervently, and in the name of *Chriſt*. But then

2. You muſt take care that your Behaviour and Life be ſuitable to your Prayers, and to the Expectation you have of the Important Bleſſings you pray for. For Inſtance

1. If you expect the Bleſſing of GOD in anſwer to your Prayers, you muſt carefully avoid every Thing that you know to be diſpleaſing to him. Otherwiſe you do in effect declare that you do not value his Bleſſing, nor care whether you obtain it or no. For do but attend to the Inconſiſtency. You pray that GOD would bleſs you, and make you happy, and yet will not avoid what you know will make you miſerable; You deſire that GOD would keep you from Sin and Evil, and yet you run into both; that he would ſave you from Hell, and yet perſiſt in the *broad way* to it; You aſk his Bleſſing whilſt you render yourſelves incapable of receiving it; and ſeek his Favour whilſt you are continually forfeiting it.——What is this but a downright Mocking of GOD? If you deſire the Bleſſing of GOD in good earneſt, you will do all you can yourſelves to ſecure it; by a Life of Virtue, Sobriety and Dili-

gence in your reſpective Occupations; by a ſpirit of Piety, Modeſty, Meekneſs, and Dependance upon him; by declining from the Paths of Temptation, and whatever tends to taint or corrupt the Mind; and eſpecially by avoiding the Vanities and Follies to which thoſe of your Age are more immediately expoſed.

2. If you deſire the Bleſſing of GOD, maintain a high Eſteem for his Word. Treaſure up the Divine Rules of it in your Memory, and bind them on your Conſcience. Conſider the Goſpel, not as a Syſtem of ſpeculative principles to fill the Head, but as a divine Diſcipline deſigned to amend the Heart: and look upon the Doctrines of it to be of more or leſs Importance in proportion to their tendency to improve a ſpiritual, holy and heavenly Temper. O, prize this holy Book, as your chief Treaſure; and beg of GOD that you may not only underſtand it better, but that you may have a growing Reliſh for the ſacred Truths contained in it. And when you are once ſo happy as to attain this, you will gradually loſe your Taſte for thoſe low, frothy, fictitious Entertainments, which young Perſons

are apt to be very fond of reading; but which ſerve only to amuſe the Mind, fill it with fantaſtick Images, and too often give it a wrong Turn, and a falſe and vitiated Taſte. SERM. XIII.

3. If you deſire to obtain the Bleſſing of of GOD, you muſt conſtantly acknowledge him, and live in a daily Dependance upon him: eye his Providence continually, and look upon every Thing which befalls you as coming from him. This is the beſt way to ſecure an Intereſt in the Divine Protection and Conduct. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy Paths (b).* But this is a more eſpecial Duty in every important Change of Circumſtances; and the beſt way to bring down a Bleſſing upon you in every Station. I will only add

*Laſtly*, As you ever hope for the Bleſſing of GOD, you muſt be ſure to be ſteadfaſt in your Adherence to his Cauſe whatever it coſt you. If you live to come out into the World, you will very probably meet with ſome who have not only a profane, but an atheiſtical, Turn of Mind; who not only neglect but deſpiſe Religion. For in Truth,



(*b*) Prov. iii. 6.

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it is a very Infidel Age we live in. One would imagine that ſome Men thought the very Eſſence of Wit to lie in Profaneneſs; and every Jeſt inſipid, that was not pointed againſt ſomething ſacred. They have ſo exalted a Genius as to be above Religion, have too much Underſtanding to mind another World, and are too wiſe to take care of their Souls. Theſe Things they leave to Vulgar Minds, with whom they diſdain to be upon a Level. Avoid all ſuch Company, I beſeech you, as the moſt dangerous Implements of the Devil to ſeduce unwary Minds into the Paths of Deſtruction. And if ſuch Perſons have any Thing in their Manner, Temper, or Addreſs that is engaging (as ſometimes they have) the Snare is more dangerous. Above all things, keep up a Reverence of GOD and his Worſhip; and abhor whatever looks like a Contempt thrown upon it, let it come from whom it will. And in Imitation of *Peter* (but not with his ſelf-ſufficience) ſay, *Lord*, by thy Grace aſſiſting me, *though all men forſake thee, yet will not I.*

I have now finiſhed what I propoſed; and in a plain, familiar way have ſhewn you,

you, how happy the Bleſſing of GOD will make you, both in this World and in the Future; and what you muſt do to obtain it. And, O! that I might be ſo happy as to engage you this Day in good earneſt to ſeek after this *one Thing needful.* Need I mention to you any other Conſiderations to induce you hereunto beſide thoſe I have already ſuggeſted, repreſenting your extenſive Happineſs, if you are the Objects of the Divine Bleſſing? But, give me leave to ſay, that if you take no care to ſecure it, if you deſpiſe and forfeit it, and live and behave ſo as to provoke and draw upon you the Curſe of GOD rather than his Bleſſing, you will be of all Creatures the moſt miſerable. The Reverſe of all this will be your Portion. You will be wretched in both Worlds. You will be uſeleſs *Cumbergrounds* here; will fall into every Snare you meet with; be a Diſhonour and Grief to your Friends; have no real Satisfaction in any thing you enjoy; be diſreſpected, deſpiſed and ſhuned by all the wiſe and valuable part of Mankind; unhonoured in Proſperity, unpitied in Adverſity; till you go down to the Grave (perhaps in immature

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Age), hurried off the Stage of Life ſooner than others by the Vices you have indulged. And then—O the unſpeakable and endleſs Scene of Miſery you muſt enter upon after Death! which is too dreadful to be deſcribed.——My Heart bleeds to think that this may poſſibly be the Caſe of any one of you, my young Friends, who have this Day had ſo fair a Warning from the Word of GOD. I hope it will not; I pray GOD it may not. And therefore let me beſeech you frequently to recollect what you have now been hearing, to excite you to ſecure the Bleſſing and and Favour of your Heavenly Father; which will make you as happy as you can be in this World, and more happy than you can conceive to be in the other: But without which you will in *both* be wretched beyond Imagination.

If you ſeek the Bleſſing of GOD now in the way before directed, you ſhall find it; let me therefore intreat you to ſeek it without Delay. In a little time it may be too late. Remember what is ſaid of unhappy *Eſau*, who at firſt deſpiſed the Bleſſing, *but afterwards when he would have inherited it, was*

*was rejected, and found* (in his Father) *no place of Repentance* (no way to change his mind) *though he ſought it carefully with Tears* (*i*). SERM. XIII.

To conclude; I have now, my Dear young Friends, *ſet before you Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing. O! chuſe Life that you may live* (*k*). Seize the Bleſſing that it may be well with you both here and for ever.—And now, may GOD almighty bleſs you all; and make you a Bleſſing to all about you, and all you *have* a Bleſſing to you! and finally beſtow upon you the greateſt of all Bleſſings, *even Life for ever more!*

(*i*) Heb. xii. 17. (*k*) Deut. xiii. 19.

*FINIS.*

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## *ERRATA* in the Third Volume.

PAGE 18. *line* 12. dele *any*. *p.* 30. *l.* 19. r. *tranquillity*. *p.* 35. *l. pen.* after *expectation* for (,) make (.) *p.* 123. *l.* 16. for *your*, r. *our*. *p.* 157. *l.* 3. for *which*, r. *with*. *p.* 190. *l.* 17. for *ſmileth on*, r. *ſmiteth*. *p.* 212. *l.* 1. for *order* r. *career*. *p.* 215. *l.* 6. after *examples* for (,) r. (.). *ditto l.* 10. after *converſe* for (,) make (.). *p.* 222. *l.* 20. for *beareſt* r. *didſt bear*. *p.* 228. *l.* 18. after *place* for (:) make (.) and begin the paragraph at, *It is*. *ditto l.* 19. after *tabernacle* for (.) make (,). *ditto l.* 21. after *down* for (,) make (.). *p.* 294. *l.* 13. after *evil* for (,) make (:). ~~*p.* 301. *l.* 24. after *ſo* add *well*. *p.* 303. *marg.* r. ἐγκαταλίπω. *p.* 304. *l.* 14. d. *to*, and after *them* add *both*.~~

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